



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

Vienna, 14 September 2020

Dear Honourable Members of IAJ,

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with Judge José Igreja Matos, First Vice President of IAJ & President of the European Association of Judges to discuss the critical role of the judiciary in combating trafficking in human beings. Following that conversation, I would like to briefly introduce you to some of the work the OSCE has done in collaboration with the judiciary in the OSCE's 57 participating States to promote a greater understanding of human trafficking and its importance within national judicial systems.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the *The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, known as the Palermo Protocol. By recognizing the multiple facets of trafficking and by promoting the full respect of the victims' human rights, the Protocol marked a fundamental shift in the international approach to the exploitation of individuals for profit. Calling upon states to adopt and implement national legislation to combat all forms of trafficking in persons, to prosecute and punish perpetrators, to protect and assist victims of trafficking, and to promote cooperation among countries. However, despite the adoption of the Protocol and the progress made over the last 20 years, impunity remains widespread and too many victims are denied justice.

My Office is using the momentum of the 20th Anniversary of the Palermo Protocol to spur a renewed impetus on enhancing prosecutions across the OSCE region as a means to end impunity and to deliver justice to victims of Trafficking in Human beings. As part of these efforts, we are promoting a broad, inclusive, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach that is (1) based on strong partnerships and (2) engages all actors of the criminal justice system and beyond. In that regard, the 2003 OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, its 2005 and 2013 Addenda and a number of Ministerial Council decisions recognize the crucial role that the judiciary plays in demonstrating states' zero tolerance to human trafficking by upholding the rights of the victims as well as by holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes.

With this letter, I would like to draw your attention to the international conference "*The Critical Role of the Judiciary in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings*" which was organized jointly by my Office, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the OSCE field operations. While maintaining a strong respect for the independence of judiciary, this international conference aimed to support the efforts of the judiciary to eradicate human trafficking by providing a platform for dialogue on international judicial co-operation and by fostering exchange on the role of the judiciary in national and regional anti-trafficking responses. The conference marked the first time in the OSCE's history that judges of the highest criminal courts from more than twenty countries gathered to discuss the strategic role of judges in combating trafficking in human beings.

I have the pleasure to share with you the final report of the conference which contains observations and concrete recommendations of numerous Supreme Court Judges on how to strengthen the role of the judiciary in combating trafficking in human beings.

I hope you will agree that the report provides a valuable foundation for further discussions around human trafficking-related challenges and I remain at your disposal for further information or any questions.

Sincerely yours,



Valiant Richey

OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings