

Trafficking in human beings - a severe form of violence against women and girls and a flagrant violation of human rights: **The Council of Europe response**

A Side Event at the 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations

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CR1 Conference Building, UN Headquarters, NEW YORK

Trafficking in human beings violates the human rights and affects the lives of countless people around the world. The vast majority of these victims are women and girls. While sexual exploitation continues to prevail, trafficking of women and girls for other forms of exploitation, such as domestic servitude, forced marriage and forced begging, is on the rise. Gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence are both root causes and consequences of human trafficking.

The Council of Europe is actively combating trafficking in human beings in its member States and beyond, in partnership with other international organisations and civil society. The Council of Europe's commitment to combating human trafficking reached an important stage in 2005 with the adoption of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Convention takes a victim-oriented perspective to anti-trafficking action and provides for a series of rights for victims of trafficking. While applying to women, men and children, the Convention recognises that measures to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings require guaranteeing gender equality and using gender mainstreaming in the development, implementation and assessment of anti-trafficking policies. The Convention has already been ratified by 41 countries and is open for accession to countries which are not members of the Council of Europe.

The Side Event will present the added value of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in the framework of international standards and the monitoring mechanism set up to ensure compliance with the Convention's provisions, in particular the reports of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA). GRETA has almost finalised the first round of the evaluation of the Convention and its country-by-country reports provide information on trends, good practices and gaps. The Side Event will also provide an opportunity to exchange on the particular challenges for women and girls, with a focus on trafficking for the purpose of domestic servitude.

Keynote speakers

- ▶ **Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni**, Deputy Secretary General, Council of Europe
- ▶ **Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger**, Ambassador Director General for Legal and Consular Affairs at the Austrian Foreign Ministry, Austrian National Coordinator on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
- ▶ **Lakshmi Puri**, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women
- ▶ **Anne Brasseur**, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- ▶ **Beate Andrees**, Head, Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour, International Labour Organization
- ▶ **Nisha Varia**, Senior Researcher, Women's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch

Moderator

- ▶ **Nicolas Le Coz**, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)



Austrian Chairmanship
Council of Europe
November 2013 – May 2014
Présidence de l'Autriche
Conseil de l'Europe
Novembre 2013 – Mai 2014





The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

Opened for signature in Warsaw in May 2005, the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings entered into force in 1 February 2008. It is a far-reaching treaty which goes beyond the minimum standards agreed upon in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (“the Palermo Protocol”).

The main added value of the Council of Europe Convention lies in the affirmation in its preamble that trafficking in human beings is a violation of human rights and an offence to the dignity and the integrity of the human being. The Convention takes a victim-oriented perspective to anti-trafficking action and provides for a series of rights for victims of trafficking, in particular the right to be identified as a victim, to be protected and assisted, to be allowed to stay in the country of destination for a minimum of 30 days in order to recover and longer if their personal situation so requires or they need to stay in order to co-operate in a criminal investigation, and to receive financial compensation for the damages suffered.

Another important added value of the Convention is the setting up of a mechanism to monitor the compliance with the obligations contained in the Convention. This monitoring mechanism, consisting of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and the Committee of the Parties to the Convention, works to ensure that the Convention's provisions do not remain a dead letter but are effectively implemented. GRETA draws up reports in respect on each Party to the Convention containing a detailed analysis of the national anti-trafficking action, identifying gaps and good practices, and providing recommendations concerning the way in which the authorities may strengthen the implementation of the Convention. Furthermore, GRETA works to clarify the substantive content of key obligations contained in the Convention.

The Council of Europe also supports governments in the implementation of the Convention and the recommendations emerging from the monitoring process. In addition, activities are organised to promote the Convention beyond the European continent so that its provisions and the co-operation framework that it provides can benefit other regions as well.

