

Christer Haglund Speech
11 November 2016 Tallinn, Riigikogu
NORDIC-BALTIC CONFERENCE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Nordic Council of Ministers has, in cooperation with partners, been combating human trafficking in the Nordic countries and Baltic States since the early 2000s.

In 2015 the Nordic Council of Ministers decided to launch a new three-year Program designed to combat human trafficking with the aim to implement tangible initiatives in the Baltic Sea Region to prevent human trafficking, to prosecute traffickers and to protect and help victims. The program consists of specific initiatives involving specialists and professionals from the Nordic and Baltic countries and Northwestern Russia. Allowing them to work more closely together, build anti-trafficking networks, create platforms for the exchange of experience and information, and publish and implement guidelines designed to improve anti-trafficking work.

The initiatives are implemented by organizations with expert knowledge in the field. The Nordic Council of Ministers is working on this program with official agencies in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Nordic countries as well as the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

This Conference is the first event within the Network and Knowledge Exchange project. Within the project will be arranged forums, expert seminars and visits: An Expert Forum on Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking will be arranged here in Tallinn next year in May.

Human Trafficking with a Focus on Media is the theme for a study visit to NORDICOM in March next year. And experts will discuss the role of media in Lithuania in autumn 2017.

A Forum on Corporate Responsibility of Businesses will discuss Prevention of Labor Exploitation. This Forum will be arranged in 2018 in Latvia.

Globalization has an impact also on human trafficking, because human trafficking is crossing borders and regions.

Traffickers use new technologies to evade the rule of law, for recruitment of victims and maximizing their profits. Two weeks ago at the Nordic Human Trafficking conference in Helsinki Rudolf Christoffersen, prosecutor from Norway working for Eurojust told about new forms of human trafficking as commercial online sexual exploitation of children. Experts in Eurojust are now trying to find out how to combat this kind of exploitation were the buyer is in one country and the crime is done in another country.

More than 70% of migrants travelling overland through North Africa to Europe have become victims of human trafficking, organ trafficking and exploitation along the way, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

In 2014, the total number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the EU28 countries was over 23,000, according to Eurostat. Sweden received the largest group: more than 7,000 children. Migrant children, especially those migrating alone without documentation, are vulnerable to trafficking, abuse and exploitation.

"Compassion, tolerance, and conviction about the equal value of all people is one of the core values of Nordic cooperation" and Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Dagfinn Høybråten has said: "We must ask ourselves whether we can do more together to fight human trafficking."

The Nordic Council of Ministers has during several years provided a platform for exchange of information on human trafficking. Yesterday the Nordic and Baltic experts discussed the anti-trafficking national mechanisms. Today we have gathered to discuss the challenges of the continuously changing forms of human trafficking and also to share experiences, discuss and network in order to use the new knowledge and contacts in everyday work

I like to thank our good cooperation partners, co-organizers of the Conference - the Baltic Assembly and the Riigikogu.

I wish you all a fruitful day!