

# OSCE Alliance Conference on Combatting Trafficking in Persons: UK statement, 6 April 2022

The UK continues to value the OSCE's role in combatting trafficking in human beings – as a convener, a thought-leader, and delivery partner – all of which have been demonstrated over the past three days. We were pleased to be able to support the Office of the Special Representative during the financial year just ended with the second phase of their project on supply chains – an area where many victims of trafficking are hidden. And we stand ready to support the Office in their response to the war in Ukraine.

As we sit here, and others have said before me, Russia continues its war of aggression, violating the borders of another country and causing widespread suffering. Among the many terrible tragedies resulting from this conflict are the massive displacement and refugee flows that are creating conditions that – as UNICEF have said – could lead to a significant spike in human trafficking and an acute child protection crisis.

Two million children have now fled Ukraine, and an additional 2.5 million children have been displaced. And as the barbarism of Russia's actions is being laid bare, there is also the risk that criminals exploit the appalling humanitarian situation.

As we heard earlier this week, human rights organisations are starting to register the first cases of suspected sex traffickers and pimps preying on Ukrainian women near refugee shelter points. They report women as having been accosted under the guise of offers of transport, work or accommodation. As more people start to flee individually, rather than in groups, individuals who need protection are sadly even more vulnerable to abuse.

I commend the work of the OSCE in documenting the testimony of those who have fled President Putin's war of aggression in Ukraine. [As our Minister for the United Nations said recently at the UN General Assembly](#), we must all listen carefully to the most vulnerable in our societies, and to come together regionally and internationally to ensure this generation of trafficking victims is the last.

Thank you.