

World Day Against Trafficking in Persons: UK statement

Today, 30 July, marks World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

Every country in the world, including in the OSCE region, is affected by human trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit, or destination for victims. We must work together to stop the appalling trade in men, women and children across the world – traffickers cannot be allowed to act with impunity.

The UK Government has made tackling modern slavery a priority, and is committed to the eradication of all forms of modern slavery, forced labour and human trafficking by 2030. In March 2020, the UK became the first country to publish a Government Modern Slavery Statement, which sets out how the government is preventing modern slavery in its supply chains.

Human trafficking requires a global and coordinated whole of society response. We therefore work closely with organisations and forums such as Alliance 8.7 and ICAT to share best practice, learn from others and encourage effective interventions.

International cooperation is even more urgent now that COVID-19 has increased the risk of exploitation of workers and has exacerbated the situation of those who are vulnerable to or already victims of modern slavery or human trafficking.

We all know that the OSCE is especially well placed to tackle this transnational issue. I would like to thank Valiant Richey and his team in the Office on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings as well as ODIHR and the field operations for their excellent work in this area. The UK was pleased to support a ground breaking OSCE project on the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings in Supply Chains Through Government Practices and Measures.

We were impressed with last week's Conference of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons and their powerful use of survivor testimony. The conference highlighted the scale of action needed to ensure that traffickers are not able to act with impunity and the importance of building a victim-centred approach.

So, in the spirit of the action oriented OSCE Office, here are some suggestions of concrete actions our States can take to make a difference:

- review our national track record on implementing the impressive body of OSCE commitments on combatting Human Trafficking, and, drawing on the valuable OSCE support and resources, scrutinise our own national government supply chains

- consider donating to ICAT – co-chaired this year by the OSCE and working to improve coordination among international organisations to achieve a more comprehensive approach to preventing and combating trafficking in persons, including protection and support for survivors
- sign up to the ILO Forced Labour Protocol, which aims to advance prevention, protection and compensation measures, as well as to intensify efforts to eliminate forced labour, including trafficking in persons and slavery like practices
- and finally, consider donating to one of the two UN Trust Funds for Victims of Human Trafficking and Contemporary Forms of Slavery