



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Warsaw Human Dimension Conference

6-17 October 2025

**EU Statement – Plenary Session 9
Humanitarian issues and other commitments**

**Combatting trafficking in human beings
Refugees and displaced persons**

FINAL (589 words)

1. The European Union and its Member States are pleased to participate in the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference.
2. Human trafficking is a grave violation of fundamental rights and a serious crime, often linked to organised networks. It takes many forms, from sexual exploitation and forced labour to child trafficking and illegal adoption. In the EU, nearly one-fifth of identified victims are children, most of them girls, while many more remain hidden, especially online. Worth €29.4 billion globally, trafficking involves actors ranging from gangs to seemingly legitimate companies. Combating it requires a whole-of-society approach, with survivors' voices at the centre to restore trust and break cycles of exploitation.
3. The EU's response is both legislative and operational. The revised Anti-Trafficking Directive strengthens victim's protection, mandates early detection, improves data collection, and requires national action plans updated every five years. It adopts a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach, extending protection to children, migrants, and persons with disabilities. Europol supports Member States in dismantling criminal networks exploiting children for sexual purposes, forced marriage, or coerced criminal activities. In 2024 alone, EU action led to 219 arrests and the uncovering of 1374 victims. The forthcoming Anti-Trafficking Hub will further enhance cooperation and exchange of best practices.
4. To prevent trafficking, we must address root causes: poverty, inequality, gender-based violence, lack of opportunities, conflicts, and discrimination. The EU has strengthened its policy toolbox with the Digital Services Act (to remove

trafficking-related content online), the Regulation on banning products made with forced labour (entered into force November 2024), the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, and the renewed Schengen Information System for preventive alerts.

5. However, wars jeopardize all efforts made to tackle these challenges. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has created unprecedented vulnerabilities, dramatically exacerbating the risks of human trafficking. According to UNODC's 2024 report, millions of displaced persons — particularly women and increasingly children — face heightened exposure to traffickers, both within Ukraine and in host countries. Trafficking networks have adapted quickly to the conflict context, exploiting displacement routes, lack of documentation, and limited law enforcement capacities. Victims are increasingly recruited online, subjected to sexual exploitation, forced labour, and coerced criminal activities.
6. Russia's war of aggression has strained institutional resources, impeding victim-centered responses and increasing impunity for traffickers. Ensuring accountability and providing reparations are essential not only for individual victims, but also for upholding the rule of law in wartime conditions. The Council of Europe has underlined that despite national and international efforts, significant gaps remain in ensuring victims' access to justice and effective compensation mechanisms. Many victims struggle to be formally identified, a prerequisite for receiving protection and assistance.
7. The situation of children is of particular concern. Numerous reports point to forcible transfers and deportations of Ukrainian children by Russia, as well as risks of exploitation during evacuation and temporary care arrangements. The EU has acted swiftly, supporting initiatives such as *Bring Kids Back UA* and the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict in Ukraine. Such initiatives highlight the importance of coordinated action to ensure the safe return of deported and forcibly transferred children, as well as their reintegration.
8. In parallel, both UNODC and the Council of Europe stress the need for stronger international monitoring, cross-border cooperation, and sustained funding to protect victims amid ongoing hostilities. We demand the immediate and unconditional return of deported and forcibly transferred Ukrainian children. A just and lasting peace must include accountability.
9. The EU and its Member States will continue to work tirelessly with all partners to eradicate trafficking in human beings.

[Alignments]