



Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women

GAATW organisations and friends in Europe jointly call for effective human rights protection of persons affected by human trafficking

Bangkok, 3 May 2007 - Today the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* celebrates its second anniversary. Three ratifications are still missing for the Convention to enter into force. The European GAATW member organisations and their networks call on their governments and parliaments for prompt ratification. Around 150 NGOs across 10 European countries participate in this action.

Two years ago today the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the *Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings*. The Convention will enter into force when 10 Member States have ratified it. Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia have already committed themselves to this Convention and therewith to effectively protect the human rights of those affected by human trafficking. Now three ratifications are still needed.

Around 150 NGOs that promote the human rights of trafficked persons in 10 European countries call on their governments and parliaments to immediately ratify this Convention. As part of this initiative, a group of six international umbrella organisations address the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso, asking for his support to catalyse the rapid enactment of the Convention by its member states. In a separate letter to President Barroso written in the name of the Expert Coordination Team of the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons (AECT), Eva Biaudet, the OSCE Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, also endorses this demand.

Support for the Council of Europe Convention is widespread, for it is the only legally binding instrument that contains provisions centring the human rights of trafficked persons by granting effective protection, rather than being exclusively an instrument for combating organised crime. The Convention therefore offers a good addition to the rights and obligations set out in the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, which most of the targeted states have ratified already. The Council of Europe Convention provides governments with comprehensive guidelines on how to combat trafficking, and ensures better protection of the human rights of trafficked persons, such as a recovery and reflection period, so that victims of the crime of human trafficking can decide whether to testify in court.

NGOs call on their governments also to recognise the essential contribution that NGOs make to combat human trafficking through their expertise and first-hand experiences and ask to be included in service provision and policy making processes to ensure comprehensive assistance to persons affected by human trafficking.

Women, men and children are trafficked to Europe into the informal sector that includes domestic work, farming, manufacturing, construction, hospitality, prostitution, etc. Trafficked persons who have freed themselves from violent and exploitative situations are often deported even before receiving basic assistance because they are considered unlawful migrants and as such criminals. Access to justice, including redress, compensation, restitution and rehabilitation for the crimes committed against them, is dismally low across Europe. Holistic assistance to people to recover from the trauma of their ordeal is conditional on their agreement to testify against the traffickers, which places them and members of their family in serious danger at the hands of the traffickers.

Steering organisations

La Strada International (EU); Women's Development Center - La Strada (Bosnia and Herzegovina); La Strada (Czech Republic); Plan (Finland); Ban Ying (Germany); La Strada (Macedonia); BlinN (The Netherlands); La Strada Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (Poland); Centre for Assistance to Persons who've Suffered from Traffic (Russian Federation); FIZ - Fraueninformationszentrum für Frauen aus Afrika, Asien, Lateinamerika und Osteuropa (Switzerland); International Women's Rights Center - La Strada (Ukraine).

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