

**Speech by EU Ambassador Lodewijk Briët,  
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**NPA Conference – Tsireledzani**

**(The implications of implementing laws and strategies to combat human  
trafficking in Africa Johannesburg 13 – 15th July 2009)**

**Honourable National Prosecuting Authority Chief, Adv Mokotedi Mpshe  
African Union Migration Programme Co-ordinator, Mr Mehari Maru  
Representatives of African Governments,  
Representatives of UN Agencies and International Organisations,  
Representatives of Civil Society,  
Fellow speakers,  
EU colleagues,  
Ladies, Gentlemen,**

- Let me start with a stark contradiction: we live in a world in which human rights are becoming accessible to more people than ever before ... but despite this, unspeakable cruelty and criminal activity are not in decline. Over a century ago when slavery was abolished, as a global community we patted ourselves on the back ... but with 20/20 hindsight, I think it is more realistic to say that it was simply driven "underground". Here we are in 2009, capable of remarkable technological feats and human achievement, but at the same time unable even to accurately quantify, let alone prevent, the prevalence of this modern day form of slavery – and it is this which brings us together this week.

- Human Trafficking is not specific to any particular geographical region or community ... in fact, it is a global scourge ... only last week did the new European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) release a report which, while claiming that "every year a significant number of children in the EU fall victim to trafficking for sexual and/or labour exploitation, adoption and organ extraction", simultaneously lamented that countries of the Union collected inadequate data and that therefore a full picture of the extent of the problem could not be provided.
  
- Ladies and Gentlemen – I submit to you that the cancer of "human trafficking" takes hold when people fail to take action. Closing one's eyes to the problem makes one complicit. As one of my colleagues observed recently: If you are not part of the solution, then regrettably you are part of the problem.
  
- The European Union takes pride to be represented here today precisely because we do care ... there can be no place for "people trafficking" in a civilised world.

### **1. *The EU as development partner***

- From an EU perspective we see our partnership with countries in Africa in the context of our shared responsibility to tackle global issues. We aim at achieving partnerships – not donor-recipient relationships – within the context of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. This means that while we remain accountable to the European taxpayer, and while we pursue coherence with all other EU external policies, we are very keen to stress national ownership of the initiatives we support.

This is precisely what has guided the European Commission's greater emphasis on budget support in South Africa.

- Our contribution to development is based on the values that form the bedrock of the European Union: peace, solidarity, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. The commoditisation of human beings as goods to be trafficked and traded, abused and exploited, offends the very soul of our Human Rights culture.

## **2. *The EU commitment to fight trafficking***

- The trafficking of persons and more specifically, the trafficking of children and women is a worldwide problem and that has seen an increase over the last years.
- The European Union is especially concerned about the phenomena of child and women trafficking. This "modern day enslavement" involves national and international networks of traffickers, frequently aligned to criminal activity ranging from child pornography to illicit drugs. Trafficking has tremendous consequences for those affected, their families, communities and ultimately, their countries. Those who have listened to the experiences of victims have been shocked by the cruelty, violence and deprivation suffered.
- If anyone here is in doubt, just visit the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg ... ask questions and listen. While I recognise that most refugees there have not been trafficked I salute the good work that Bishops Abrahams and Verryn do daily with victims.

- So, no-one should be in doubt: the European Commission, in fact the European Union, supports the signature, ratification and implementation of the UN protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children (**‘Palermo Protocol’**).
- In March this year, the Commission made two proposals to the Council and the European Parliament to step up the fight against trafficking in human beings and child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child pornography in Europe. The objective of the European Commission's Vice President for Justice, Freedom and Security, Jacques Barrot, is to provide better EU-wide assistance for victims and to include tougher action against criminals responsible for child sexual abuse and trafficking.
- It goes without saying that to tackle human trafficking successfully will require cross-border collaboration that might well require us to cede small amounts of national sovereignty in the interests of our citizens.
- We thus believe that combating trafficking requires a comprehensive approach, we wish to share the idea of an approach referred to as the “Three P’s” – Prevention, Protection and Prosecution ... the protection of human rights and human security being the underlying principles.
- This comprehensive approach requires a coordinated policy response. It also means focusing on the entire chain of trafficking, from the countries of origin, through the countries of transit to the

countries of destination. We must do this together and share the lessons learnt.

### **3. *EU-Africa Framework to combat trafficking***

- In 2006, in Tripoli, in the context of the Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, the African Union and the European Union adopted the Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, especially Women and Children. It is an ambitious action plan, but the final goal of eradicating this scourge is worth the effort. The EU will do its best to work with its partners in Africa to promote and implement this action plan.
  
- The European Union is currently supporting various interventions on the continent, particularly in Western and Southern Africa, both at regional and national levels. For instance, in West Africa, the EU has supported inter-regional collaboration to fight trafficking in human beings, and more specifically, in children.
  
- In Southern Africa, the European Union has been supporting concrete actions to prevent trafficking of children: for instance, in Zambia we are working with ILO on mapping trafficking of children in the country and also preparing a training manual to fight trafficking of children. In Zimbabwe we have just committed R8 million (or US \$1 million) to work with UNICEF to protect and reunite children with their families, including those who have been deported back to Zimbabwe. We support similar reunification programmes in Angola.

- Here in South Africa, we have committed some R70 million (€6,3 million) to work with the South African National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) in their efforts to prevent and react to "human trafficking". This comprehensive programme is the largest anti-trafficking action by far supported by the EC.
- The present financial and economic crises are exacerbating the situation by increasing the vulnerability of children and women – alongside often high levels of poverty, exclusion from rights and opportunities - to finding themselves in the clutches of "human traffickers".
- In order to improve our global response, we must strengthen other sectors as well. Especially important is the criminal justice system, to effectively prevent, investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases of trafficking in persons, and this also requires close cooperation with third countries.
- To support the continent to effectively fight trafficking in human beings, initiatives such as the one we have seen recently at the SADC-level conference on child trafficking in Maputo, hold significant promise. It is only by adopting action plans, including the enactment of appropriate legislation, that we will prevent and mitigate trafficking.
- Mr Maru, we have also seen with great interest the launch of the African Union COMMIT campaign on the 16 June, just one month ago, which should lead the way to further initiatives on the continent.

- Ladies and Gentlemen, we all have an obligation to the safety of our children ... and those of our brothers' and sisters'. This valuable conference must, to be successful, over the next few days, allow for vigorous exchanges and for the sharing of experiences and best practices. Debate, careful analysis and well reasoned conclusions will be crucial to prepare the ground for much needed further interventions. Allow me in closing to echo Advocate Mpshe's plea that we adopt concrete measures to work together and to improve and speed-up our law enforcement processes.
  
- Ladies and gentleman I thank you for your attention. ***Tsireledzani***