



## **Joint Statement by OSCE Special Representative Richey and UN Special Representative Patten on preventing and responding to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and sexual violence in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine**

*Joint Press Statement: For Immediate Release*

**STOCKHOLM, 30 March 2023** – The OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Valiant Richey and UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten expressed their grave concern about the harm of sexual exploitation, and sexual violence and its cost for the whole of society, as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The two Special Representatives made the following statement on the margins of the Conference on Prevention Models to Address the Demand that Fosters Trafficking for Sexual Purposes, under the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union:

“More than 8 million people have fled Ukraine since the war began, generating the largest refugee crisis since the Second World War. As the war drags on, rising food and energy prices put pressure on national economies and on the most vulnerable people. We must ensure that an emergency response is accompanied by sustainable solutions that increase societies’ resilience against trafficking in persons, especially women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation and sexual violence.

We acknowledge that some decisive measures to prevent the trafficking and exploitation of displaced persons from Ukraine, such as information campaigns, hotlines, and training of frontline workers, have been promptly put in place. In line with UN Security Council Resolutions 2331 and 2388, as well as the OSCE recommendations<sup>1</sup>, prevention and protection measures should be strengthened, inside and outside Ukraine. Law enforcement, border guards and security officers must be trained and equipped to identify and assist victims and potential victims. Investigators and prosecutors should be given adequate resources and enhance information-sharing networks to ensure accountability for trafficking and any underlying crimes. Victims of trafficking must receive holistic assistance and

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendations of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings on the need to enhance anti-trafficking prevention amid mass migration flows | OSCE, March 2022 and Recommendations on enhancing efforts to identify and mitigate risks of trafficking in human beings online as a result of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine | OSCE, April 2022.

services for their physical, psychological and socioeconomic recovery as well as rehabilitation and reintegration.

Moreover, we must ensure that measures to prevent and combat trafficking adopt a gender-sensitive and survivor-centred approach ensuring that victims of trafficking are treated with dignity. Addressing the vulnerabilities of people on the move remains a priority. In addition, more co-ordinated efforts are required to effectively disrupt and dismantle the human trafficking business model. This includes adopting and implementing necessary legislation to hold traffickers accountable as well as anyone who contributes to trafficking, including facilitators and sex buyers who incentivize exploitation.

We are extremely concerned that much of the trafficking activities now happen online. Coinciding with the massive displacement, there are large spikes in online searches for explicit content and sexual services from Ukrainians. This has created an alarming incentive for traffickers to recruit and exploit vulnerable women and children at scale. It is urgent to root out those who create the demand and platforms that allow for this type of violence and exploitation to thrive. Self-regulation and voluntary safety measures implemented by technology companies have been largely ineffective. States need to put in place policies mandating proactive monitoring and removals of exploitative materials, as well as mechanisms for public reporting and for shutting down abusive platforms.

In response to the increase of trafficking risks and in line with our international, regional and national obligations and commitments, we have a collective responsibility to prevent the current humanitarian crisis turning into a human trafficking crisis. We commit to scaling up and strengthening our actions to enhance the overall response to trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and all forms of sexual violence.”

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