

Anders Oljelund 2007-11-31 *

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests from many countries in Europe.
I have been asked to talk about trafficking in human beings.

I do so in my capacity as the coordinator against trafficking of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Only ten years ago trafficking of human beings was hardly an issue to be dealt with by a ministry for foreign affairs. Today it is. The opening up of borders, the possibility to travel, the enormous power of attraction that rich countries have on those who live in poverty and without hope for a better future *and* the organized crime that benefits from the profits that trafficking in human beings yield; all this makes trade in human beings something for foreign ministries to deal with. Because trafficking is international to its character and if you want to fight trafficking you must rely on international cooperation. Therefore we welcome very much this conference co-arranged by the Council of Europe and the European Agency for fundamental Rights. Both the council of Europe and the European Union have a great role to play in the issues we are going to discuss today. The European Union is proud that it has achieved an internal market for goods, services and people. We are less proud that this has also become an internal market for trafficking. Trade in human beings is no longer something that Europe should look upon as an external evil. It is an internal evil. No country can say that trade in human beings does not take place here, only elsewhere.

Still, selling and buying of human beings is nothing new. We know, and you know. It has taken place all over the world, since long. It has never been abolished, like we thought slavery was two hundred years ago. Governments, including foreign ministries, should have paid attention to those circumstances in peoples' lives that is likely to expose them to risks of exploitation and trafficking. We know that, and you who attend this conference are probably more aware of that kind of discrimination than most.

What is trade in human beings? How is it defined and what does it look like? Before I try to answer these questions more in detail let me say that it is basically about human rights. All human beings, men, women, girls, boys, children have human rights. Nobody can own another human being, like they own a thing. Nobody can sell or buy human beings, in the way they sell and buy goods. Trafficking in persons is to take ownership of something you are not entitled to own.

The child convention, in 1989, was a big step forward in this sense. Up till then children were primarily looked upon as weak, in need of protection.. Rightly so. But with the child convention we started to look upon children in a new way. The child is

also a human being in its own right, in possession of all the human rights that the convention enumerates. The convention implies that the State, the Government, has an obligation to protect the child, even against its parents, if necessary. This is a difficult thing to grasp. Parents have the primary responsibility for their children, but they do not possess their children,.

The conclusion of this is that we must give voices and power to our children, to their mothers, to those who are weak, irrespective of race, religion, social status. This is what the human rights conventions, to which we have all adhered, teach us. This is in my mind where the fight against trafficking must start.

There are many international conventions about human rights. General ones about everybody and special ones about women, about children, about minorities, against racial discrimination. Some of these are applicable on the kind of exploitation that trafficking causes. But we also have specific international conventions about trafficking in human beings. Let us look at the basic convention against trafficking. It is called the Palermo protocol and it is part of a United Nations convention of 2002

The Palermo protocol says that trafficking in persons means that somebody has been recruited in order to exploit him or her later on. The intention to exploit is there from the beginning but very often the victim is not told or does not understand until it is too late. The recruitment takes place by means of coercion, or abduction or fraud, by the abuse of power or simply using the vulnerability of somebody. This means that trafficking can take place without the use of force. It is enough to lure somebody or to use his or her weakness or dependence.

Children are of course always vulnerable because they do not understand. They trust the adults; they must because they have no choice. Therefore it is said in the Palermo protocol that when it comes to children, that is everybody under eighteen, then it can be trafficking even if you do not use deception or any kind of force.

What is exploitation? That is difficult to define exactly, but sexual exploitation is one example given in the Palermo protocol. Forced labour or any practice similar to slavery is another. The removal of organs is a third example.

Trafficking sounds like transporting from one country to another. But that is not so. Trafficking can take place within a country, even within a village.

Most countries have ratified these international conventions, including the Palermo protocol. And most countries today have national legislation against trafficking in persons. All EU countries are obliged to have it. Then it is for the government to guarantee its citizens these rights. If somebody is a trafficker in persons he commits a crime, against the national law. But it is not the trafficker that violates the human rights

conventions. It is the government, if it is not willing to take measures to protect its citizens against these violations.

When it comes to trafficking, governments have promised to do three things. First of all to try to prevent trafficking from taking place. That can be done by addressing the very root causes why people end up in the risk zone. It can be poverty, it can be lack of income. It can be a consequence of conflict and war. It can be lack of education or lack of equality between men and women. If you are a young woman or a girl without real power, without equality, then it is probably easier to exploit you. So empowerment of women is one way of combating trafficking. Empowerment of women is very often also a way of protecting the children from being abused. Let me give you as small but illustrative example of empowerment of women, from the history of my own country. When in the late forties, when I was very young, a general child allowance for every family was introduced in Sweden as part of our social security system. The money was paid to the mother, not to the father. That was the way of making sure that dad did not buy drinks for the money or gamble on horse racing. But also, and maybe more importantly: that was a way of empowering the mother.

If we want to fight child trafficking we must also strengthen the situation of women, of mothers. No development effort is more efficient than the one that goes to and through women

We must also prevent trafficking by addressing demand in our own country. Without demand there would not be any trafficking. It is the market, the clients, that provide the business opportunities for the organized crime that is behind trafficking and which, also, is behind very much of the procuring of sexual services. This is one of the backgrounds of the rather unique Swedish legislation that criminalizes the buyer of sexual services, not the seller.

The driving force behind the Swedish law on prostitution is not morality but equality and human rights. The aim of our human rights conventions is to protect the ones who are in exposed situations, such as children when they risk to be exploited, or women when they risk being abused.

So far about demand on sexual services, which we have concentrated on in Sweden so far. But trafficking in human beings may also be for labour purposes. As a matter of fact, in Europe in general, trade in human beings for forced labour is probably much more common than for sexual abuse. Young men and also women, sometimes children are being used in European factories, in restaurants, in domestic services, in begging in the streets or in organized petty theft.

There is still a demand. Without demand there would not be any market. And the market is us; buying cheap labour that might be trafficked, encouraging begging that might be organized and exploited by someone else. Begging is not forbidden but using beggars for your own benefit may be trafficking, even if you are a parent to the child.

In my country, recently, hundreds of Chinese teenagers have come and then, few hours or days afterwards, they have disappeared. We do not know where, may be to be used in some low cost factory elsewhere in Europe. What we know is that we did not succeed in protecting these Chinese children, according to our obligations to the Child Convention.

Secondly, governments have promised to prosecute the perpetrators of trafficking, the traffickers. This is not easy because inter national crime is often well organized and those who could witness in the courts against them are very often the victims of trafficking themselves and they do not dare to do so.

Therefore, if you want to prosecute you have to protect the victims by giving them various kinds of support, for instance, the right to stay in the country for a period and not being sent away back home.

Prevention, prosecution and protection are the three p:s in any effort to fight trafficking.

Protection of victims is the most difficult, I believe. We have a long way to go before we are able to say that we have achieved what we want to achieve: a good protection, a lasting medical and psychological rehabilitation n of the victims, a reintegration into normal life, a job, an income and a social context to belong to for those girls who very often come from other countries, other cultures and quite other social circumstances.

We must start protection with a very basic thing: that is to realize that victims of prostitution, victims of slavelike labour or child beggars are victims and not illegal immigrants or simple prostitutes or outlaws or misbehaved children. That is difficult and needs much awareness raising of the public, and education and training for police people, social workers, prosecutors, border guards, airport staff, embassy people or anyone that is likely to come in contact with victims trafficking. (Parenthesis: I am not particularly fond of the expression “victim” and “perpetrator”. If you are labeled victim it sounds as if you are always a victim, by constitution. A victim of trafficking is a victim of trafficking and not a victim in all respects.)

Today, we cannot say that we are able to provide that protection, for everybody. In practice, we discriminate those who are not looked upon as “Swedish”, unintentionally, but still. The Minister talked about this this morning.

Let me make a distinction here to understand better what exploitation is, in the sense of the anti-trafficking laws. Black market labour is not the same thing as trafficking. Child labour and child trafficking are not the same thing. The big majority of children in child labour are being sent away from their homes out of necessity, because their parents could not feed them and maybe also because they hope that they would be trained in some profession. Child labour is a necessity in major parts of the world. Many of them are probably taken well care of, but too many of them not. There are no guarantees and those

who send their children away are normally not in a position to demand any guarantees. They have no choice.

When my grandfather died in the age of thirty-three, my grandmother could not provide for her two small sons. They were sent away, my father to a fisherman's family and my uncle to a farmer. This was precisely 100 years ago and nothing unusual at that time, in Sweden. Nobody would compare it to slavery or trade in human beings and it was not. All went well for the two boys. The situation in Sweden 100 years ago was not anywhere near the degree of poverty and despair that we see today in large parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America and even parts of Europe.

But the individual situation for many of the children may have been comparable. There was, also in Sweden, exploitation, maltreatment and abuse, also sexual abuse of Swedish children at that time, and still today. These things were not discussed openly at the turn of the former century. They have come out of the darkness only now, many years later.

In our practical work, we must concentrate on situations in which there is an evident risk; where exploitation is the intended purpose. There is a term called "worst kind of child labour". The meaning is when children are really being maltreated, deprived of their human rights, for the benefit of others. When they are deprived of their childhood and refused their right to go to school.

Human rights is one thing. The ability for an individual or a group to enjoy these rights is another thing. There we still have a long way to go, in all countries, including our own. Let us hope that the so called globalization, from which no country can isolate itself or should isolate itself, will bring with it a new understanding of human rights, so that also the Roma people will be looked upon in a new way and received in a new way in our schools, on our labour market and in our civil life.

I started out by saying that trafficking is a question of human rights and the dignity of each person, child or adult, man or woman. This is where we must begin.

Yesterday, during the service, the bishop of Stockholm was present. She had attended a conference against street violence. She said that one conclusion from that conference was that you must never degrade anybody with your eye, with the way you look at him or her. This is where violence starts: with a degrading eye. And this was, it is said, how the violence started which led to the death of a young boy in Stockholm the other day. Nothing particular had happened to bring about a quarrel. Nothing more than a glance triggered it off. Nothing more and nothing less.

We must learn to look upon each other with respect, to see dignity and the possibilities others, to see the lovable person.