



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
118th Assembly and related meetings
Cape Town (South Africa), 13 – 18 April 2008



Retsudvalget (2. samling)
REU alm. del - Bilag 297
Offentligt

Governing Council
Item 7

CL/182/7(i)-R.1
12 March 2008

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

(i) PARLIAMENTARY FORUM TO FIGHT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Vienna, 12 February 2008

The Parliamentary Forum took place in the framework of and as a prelude to the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking, a gathering of State and non-State actors organized by the United Nations to forge a coalition against human trafficking. Hosted by the Austrian Parliament, the Parliamentary Forum was organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking.

The Forum was attended by some 112 members of parliament from 58 countries as well as observers from a host of international parliamentary and intergovernmental organizations. It provided an opportunity to examine ways in which parliaments and parliamentarians can be more actively involved in the global drive against human trafficking. In this context, participants shared relevant experiences and best practices. In addition, the Forum was an opportunity for fruitful interaction between parliamentarians, experts, academics, prominent personalities and other anti-human trafficking activists.

A mock trial was staged for purposes of identifying recommended practices for dealing with victims of human trafficking.

The report of the proceedings of the Parliamentary Forum was presented at the Vienna Forum Plenary Session on 14 February.

Following is a report on the main conclusions and recommendations of the Parliamentary Forum.

The Forum revealed the scope, magnitude and complexity of the phenomenon of human trafficking. The combination of panel discussions, interactive sessions - including a mock trial - as well as free-flowing discussions among participants contributed to highlight the point that human trafficking is an increasingly serious crime with ever-evolving and refined techniques that require a multi-disciplinary and sophisticated approach. Indeed, human trafficking involves multiple coercive, abusive and exploitative elements which may be difficult to detect.

Many participants referred to human trafficking as a modern form of slavery involving serious human rights violations. Ms. Barbara Prammer, Speaker of the Austrian National Council called it the cruellest crime of today's globalized world. Participants learned that among the various forms of trafficking, human trafficking ranked third only to the trafficking in arms and drugs, generating more than \$30 billion in profits for its perpetrators. It was also pointed out that most victims of this inhuman trade were women and children. In the words of Eva Biaudet, OSCE Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, unfortunately, human trafficking is a phenomenon that is hidden, well-organized, growing and adapting to measures taken to fight it.

Participants decried the fact that all too often, policies and measures devised by governments to fight human trafficking had the end effect of punishing the victim, who was already suffering from serious abuse by traffickers. All too often, the anti-trafficking war was side-tracked by other emerging problems such as illegal immigration and governments tended to fight trafficking with stringent restrictions on migration, including legal migration. Such measures only helped to drive migration underground and to complicate the fight against human trafficking.

Participants stressed the importance of tackling the root causes of trafficking, which include inter alia the negative effects of globalization, poverty, conflict, gender inequality and poor governance. In the words of actress Julia Ormond, prosecution and imprisonment of offenders are not enough. There must be a resolve to tackle socio-economic problems too. For the fight against trafficking to succeed, it should focus on the victim and their human rights. A three-pronged approach is required to fight trafficking, namely: prevention, prosecution and protection. Some participants proposed the extension of the protection strategy to include compensation for and rehabilitation of victims to enable them to start a new life.

It was also noted that fighting human trafficking effectively required cooperation between source and destination countries and that anti-trafficking policies should be sensitive to local realities, religions and cultures. Many participants pointed to the need for more attention to be paid to the demand side of the problem. In other words, what measures could be taken to curb demand in the destination countries. Another actress, Emma Thompson, suggested that the client, that is the person who pays for sex, should be brought into the discussion. How does that person distinguish between a genuine prostitute and one who has been trafficked?

Examining the role that parliaments and parliamentarians can play in the fight against human trafficking, participants agreed that they should make greater use of their traditional functions of law-making, oversight, representation and resource allocation. In so doing, they should be guided by the three "Ps": prevention, prosecution and protection. Parliaments have a pivotal role to play in ensuring ratification of international instruments, harmonising national laws with these instruments, overseeing their implementation and ensuring that the issue of human trafficking remains on the national agenda. As representatives of the people and opinion leaders, parliamentarians have primary responsibility for raising awareness of the scope of the problem and encouraging reflection on how to combat it. In this regard, partnerships can be built with the media and civil society to educate the public and promote a better understanding of the problem.