

OSCE report on combating trafficking in human beings: UK response

Dear Madam Chair,

Thank you, Special Representative Richie, for preparing this report and for you and your team's work in this important area.

We share your prioritisation of the 4 major challenges in the global fight against trafficking in human beings – on impunity, protection of victims, the scale of the problem, and political will.

No one country can eliminate forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking alone. There must be a coordinated and sustained international effort to tackle this heinous crime. Tackling forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking should be, and indeed must be, a top global policy priority. And not just for governments, but also businesses, society and all of us as individuals. We welcome the supportive role the OSCE and your Office plays on shining a spotlight on this issue and supporting capacity and capability building by participating States.

On impunity, we have worked in the UK to provide law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to tackle modern slavery. This includes a maximum life sentence for perpetrators, and support for the police to increase modern slavery prosecutions. Raising awareness of modern slavery helps equip the public and frontline professionals with the knowledge to spot signs of modern slavery and report concerns.

Ensuring victims get the support they need and ensuring that survivors are empowered, requires us doing more to build the evidence base to better understand drivers and vulnerabilities in different sectors and country contexts. The [Alliance conference by your Office this year](#), with its focus on demand, provided very useful insight on this issue. With a greater understanding of the drivers of modern slavery, we can employ more tools and tactics in the fight.

In the UK, we have a National Referral Mechanism which identifies and supports potential victims of modern slavery by connecting them with appropriate support. The UK government has also partnered with the Salvation Army to provide adult victims in England and Wales with specialist support. This includes safehouse accommodation, financial support and assistance in accessing health care and legal advice.

We recognise that women and girls are disproportionately affected by modern slavery and human trafficking, and that common themes of violence against women and girls include exploitation, coercion, control and abuse.

We agree with the focus of increasing transparency in supply chains, and are pleased to be able to continue funding your Office's project in this area.

We have taken steps to address forced labour through public procurement. In March 2020, we published [the world's first government modern slavery statement](#). Government departments will publish annual modern slavery statements, starting from this month. Since the beginning of this year, most new central government procurement contracts need to take account of 'social value criteria', such as reducing modern slavery risks. The Modern Slavery Assessment Tool was launched to implement effective due diligence and training, provided to commercial staff.

Additionally, there is now a requirement on businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more to publish an annual modern slavery statement, outlining the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

We agree with multilateral solutions to address this problem. At the G7 meeting this year, leaders committed to prevent, identify, and eliminate forced labour in global supply chains. We also encourage all States to join the [Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking](#). We support the Inter Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons and support further coordination among international organisations to ensure as comprehensive approach to preventing and combating trafficking in persons, including protection and support for survivors, as possible.

Once again may I offer my appreciation for the work you Mr Richey and your team have done over the past year. We look forward to continuing to work together on this important issue in 2022 and beyond. Thank you.