

3 June 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing of the Thematic Debate on Human Trafficking**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to thank at the outset Member States and civil society and all those who took the floor to make the debate lively, comprehensive and productive.

I would also like to thank our keynote speakers, H.E. Anwar Gargash and Ms. Ashley Judd for their valuable contributions.

Dr. Gargash presented a comprehensive overview of actions that the U.A.E. has taken and the progress it has achieved in dealing with the great challenge of human trafficking.

We also heard a moving testimony by Ms. Ashley Judd who challenged our hearts and minds to step up our efforts to put an end to this most degrading form of exploitation.

May I also thank the moderators, UNODC Executive Director Mr. Antonio Costa and Deputy Secretary-General of the Council of Europe Ms. Maud de Boer Buquicchio, and, all the panellists for their excellent contributions that ensured this debate was dynamic and insightful.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is clear from our deliberations that effective policy needs to be put into practice as a matter of urgency to fight sexual and labour exploitation. It needs to be comprehensive, and include preventive and protective measures, as well as, stronger measures to end the trafficker's impunity.

Most of all the need for closer partnership was highlighted by many. At the local, national and international level, there is a need for more effective partnership among all stakeholders, including governments, parliamentarians, civil society, the private sector, the media and NGOs.

Factors that make people vulnerable to human trafficking were identified, and need for preventive measures stressed. This morning's panel examined in detail examples of good practices to prevent trafficking.

We also heard a comprehensive overview of cross—sectoral governmental actions, as well as, concrete examples how the private sector is combating this crime – especially by making

business partners aware of the deplorable phenomenon, but also through providing training programmes for all kinds of stakeholders. This kind of grass-root approach is crucial to successfully fight human trafficking, and should thus be further developed and supported.

However, there is still considerable ignorance about human trafficking, and we must do more to raise awareness. The role of the media, entertainers, civil society and government is crucial in this regard. There was a video presentation describing an effective awareness-raising campaign catering to the young people that are particularly susceptible to the perils of human trafficking.

A consensus emerged that we should combat the problem at its source by making it more difficult to trade in humans and by reducing demand for products and services of exploited people. We need to increase the risks and lower the rewards of human trafficking.

We also heard about concrete approaches to strengthen cross-border cooperation and prosecute traffickers in persons. In this regard, the role of regional networks and initiatives was emphasized.

Effective prosecution also requires appropriate protection and assistance to victims, especially with a view to reconciling interests and promoting understanding between victim service providers and law enforcement.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Today's debate has shown that we share a common commitment and goals. That we stand ready and willing to join forces to overcome the scourge of human trafficking.

To this end, several speakers suggested that we need to develop a global action plan, a comprehensive mechanism to counter-act human trafficking. This mechanism should provide us with a vehicle to put anti-trafficking treaties into practice. We heard another concrete proposal to establish a regular review mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, in order to hold Member States, the UN system and its partner to account.

It is clear from today's thematic debate that there is significant interest in the General Assembly and among our partners to continue our work to combat Human Trafficking.

Given this interest I am convinced that we can say that today's debate helped to generate fresh impetus among Member States and other stakeholders to strengthen cooperation and fully implement existing international agreements.

Thus, allow me to call on all of you to use this momentum to take our common fight a step further towards obliterating the heinous crime of human trafficking from the surface of the planet.

We can achieve this only by promoting a system of international relations that puts human rights and the empowerment of the individual at its centre.

Thank you.