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MAJLIS OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN ON FOREIGN
AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS, FOREIGN
INVESTMENTS AND TOURISM

(18 April 2023, Vienna)

Dear Minister Bujar Osmani,

Dear Ms. Helga Schmid.

Dear Mr. Valiant Richey,

Dear Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, let me thank the conveners for **inviting** me to speak at today's event, held at such a high level.

It gives me special satisfaction to speak in such an authoritative audience. Without any exaggeration, this event and its agenda are of particular importance.

Dear participants!

It is certainly that **human trafficking**, as a global challenge, affects the lives of hundreds of thousands of people around the world, regardless of gender, age or race, making the problem **unprecedented in the global scale**.

Given that, international community is **taking** effective measures to address this negative phenomenon. A number of **conceptual documents**, programs, action plans, primarily aimed at **enhancing global efforts to combat human trafficking**, have been adopted within the framework of international structures.

In this regard, we highly appreciate measures taken by the **UN, OSCE, ILO, IOM, and other organizations**.

Dear participants!

Given the global trends observed in recent years in combating contemporary challenges and threats, particularly human trafficking, **Uzbekistan's approaches and priorities have been completely revised and improved in the following:**

The first - strengthening of the institutional framework. **The National Commission on Combating Human Trafficking and Forced Labor**, headed by the Chairperson of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan Senator Tanzila Narbaeva, has been functioning since 2019 to coordinate activities of all ministries and agencies in this area, and constantly engage with representatives of civil society and international organizations as well.

In addition, the institution of the **National Rapporteur on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Forced Labor** was established.

The second - improvement of national legislation. In recent years, about **40** normative legal acts have been adopted in the sphere of combating forced labor and human trafficking, a number of conventions and protocols of the International Labor Organization and the International Organization for Migration have been ratified.

A new version of the law "**On Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**" was adopted, and the National Referral and Identification Mechanism for victims or presumed victims of human trafficking was approved.

Enforcing the criminal liability **for child and forced labor** is of among measures with a high effectiveness.

The National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Human Trafficking was developed with the support of OSCE/ODIHR.

The third – enhancement of international cooperation.

In cooperation with international organizations, we conduct various activities to raise public awareness about combating trafficking in human beings.

Lifting the call for a global boycott of Uzbek cotton by Cotton Campaign can be used as a striking example how effective the large-scale reforms are.

Moreover, in recent years Uzbekistan improved its rankings in the annual Trafficking in Persons Reports of the US State Department.

This achievements are the results of **the strong political will demonstrated by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev**, as well as the comprehensive work carried out by **the National Commission on Combating Forced Labor.**

The government of Uzbekistan puts efforts for mechanization of the entire production cycle, reducing the need in use of labour force. The reduction of forced labour cases comes out of the government's consolidated efforts to eliminate forced labor by ending compulsory cotton harvesting and implementing a new policy prohibiting forced labour in the hiring of workers and imposing strict penalties for such offenses. It is to highlight a significant increase in the minimum wage for the cotton harvest, and introduction of the practice for collective bargaining between workers and employers with a hands-off approach of the government.

Dear participants!

Uzbekistan sees the **OSCE** as a unique international platform for enhanced dialogue on all relevant issues on the agenda, including political and security issues.

The **OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**, established 20 years ago, plays an important role in developing and implementing systemic measures to globally combat the problem.

Resultative cooperation goes within the framework of combating human trafficking. 2022 was marked by a joint organization of a pilot simulation training on combating human trafficking, and a high-level conference on “Prevention of human trafficking for the purpose of forced labour in the supply chains: global and regional developments in supply chain legislation, policy and practice” with participation of the **OSCE Special Representative on Combating Human Trafficking Valiant Richey**.

We, together with the OSCE, successfully implemented a joint project on supporting the further development of the national institutional framework to combat human trafficking in Uzbekistan, which was envisaged in the Road Map on cooperation between Uzbekistan and the OSCE for 2021-2022. We also included several projects in this direction to our new Road Map for 2023-2024.

Furthermore, in order to implement new projects with the participation of the OSCE, we propose to:

- develop and implement new projects in the field of prevention of victims of human trafficking, and
- elaborate a regional program to combat human trafficking in the Central Asian countries, which will provide for conducting regional trainings for representatives of law enforcement agencies and implementing new manuals on human trafficking.

In conclusion, availing myself of this opportunity, I would like to thank you personally, Secretary General, and the **OSCE Special Representative on Combating Human Trafficking**, for your continued support, friendship and dedication to the OSCE comprehensive security concept, your continuous support to democratic reforms in Uzbekistan, as well as your recommendations that undoubtedly will lead to ensuring the rights and legitimate interests of citizens.

We stand ready for further dialogue and cooperation.

Thank you for attention!