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## **Preventing trafficking in human beings in governmental supply chains focus of OSCE-co-organized regional conference in Athens**

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ATHENS

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ATHENS, 1 February 2019 – A two-day regional conference on preventing trafficking in human beings through government procurement practices and measures, with a focus on the Balkan region, concluded yesterday in Athens, Greece.

The conference, organized by the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in partnership with the Mayor’s Office of Athens, the Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings at the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ONR), the Athens Partnership and Bloomberg Associates, brought together over 200 participants from 15 countries.

Public procurement amounts to trillions of euros of public spending in the OSCE region.

Procurement and anti-trafficking experts, representatives of the city, regional and national governments, and representatives of international and non-governmental organizations explored how governments can leverage this purchasing power through their procurement practices and measures to help prevent human trafficking and labour exploitation in their supply chains.

During the conference, the Mayor of Athens, Yiorgos Kaminis, announced a new pilot program to develop policies and implement practices aimed at ensuring, to the fullest extent possible, that the City of Athens does not purchase goods manufactured or contract services provided by victims of human trafficking.

“Governments have a crucial part to play in working towards a supply chain that is free of human trafficking and forced labour – and not just at the national level,” said Heracles Moskoff, National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings. “We see with the City of Athens’s pilot programme a tremendous leadership role by a municipal government in this fight, and it is an example that we want to replicate throughout other cities in Greece.”

Valiant Richey, OSCE Acting Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, noted the importance of the conference’s cross-sectoral group of stakeholders, including attorneys who have worked with trafficking victims, procurement and anti-trafficking officials, multi-national companies, and NGOs. “By bringing together all of the stakeholders who can play a role in developing important government anti-trafficking measures, we can ensure that our efforts can have a significant – and sustainable – impact, in Athens, Greece, the Balkans region, and beyond,” said Richey.

Rose Gill Hearn, former Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation during the Bloomberg Administration and Principal of the Municipal Integrity Practice at Bloomberg Associates, an international philanthropic consultancy and a co-organizer of the conference, said: “The City of Athens, through its anti-trafficking and public procurement pilot programme, is demonstrating its commitment to working against the scourge of labour exploitation in supply chains. We truly applaud Mayor Kaminis for supporting this conference and initiative to analyse how cities can use their buying power – collectively billions of euro – to safeguard against tainted procurement.”

The second day of the conference featured in-depth sessions on the recommendations of the OSCE’s Model Guidelines on Government Measures to Prevent Trafficking for Labour Exploitation in Supply

Chains.

Speakers discussed action that governments can undertake to prevent trafficking in supply chains, such as identifying industry-specific trafficking risks, training public procurement officials and vendors, implementing anti-trafficking due diligence in the procurement process, and developing monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

This year, the OSCE will continue to lead efforts to address labour exploitation through responsible public procurement. The office of the Special Representative will run a series of workshops to strengthen the capacities of practitioners from OSCE participating States to prevent human trafficking in supply chains.

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