PP by the delegation of the Republic of Croatia

Human trafficking is a big concern for the Republic of Croatia. Lying on the eastern side of the Adriatic Sea, Croatia is a destination, source and transit country for men, women and children subjected to human trafficking. Croatian women and girls fall victim to sex trafficking within the country, while there are also women and girls from neighbouring Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other nearby countries subjected to forced prostitution. Men are forced to work in agricultural sectors and children (mostly Roma) are subjected to conditions of begging and theft.

Organized crime for human trafficking and smuggling poses a big threat to Croatia, as its entire eastern borders with Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro aren’t only state borders but are also the external border of the European Union. Therefore, there is a certain interest of criminal organizations to transfer people illegally into Croatia. The crisis in the middle east started numerous waves of refugee streams to the European Union with the Balkans route emerging as one of the most popular routes to the European Union. Croatia has therefore to tackle an increased amount of illegal border crossings, making it difficult to distinguish human smuggling and human trafficking. Unfortunately, this led to a stronger dedication to the large combat against human smuggling than to the issue of human trafficking.

However, the government of Croatia is showing an increased amount of commitment to combat human trafficking inside its territory, after it received criticism for mostly neglecting the issues during the 1990s and early 2000s. Unlike in previous times, the Croatian government has increased the amounts of proactive investigations and prosecutions. The article 106 of the criminal code, which criminalizes sex and labour trafficking, received harsher punishments. During that period the amount of discovered cases rose steadily, but so did the prosecutions. Law enforcement personnel under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior conducted proactive investigations on commercial sex establishments, particularly during the tourist seasons, and joint investigations with the labour inspectorate in the construction and agriculture sectors. The government also trained 244 border and traffic police on trafficking issues, including developmental considerations in working with victims of child trafficking. The government also maintained law enforcement cooperation with foreign governments, EUROPOL, INTERPOL, and the Southeast Law Enforcement Center. Concerning the protection of victims, the government and NGOs provided victims protection and assistance, including shelter, medical assistance, legal assistance, psycho-social support, rehabilitation, and reintegration services. The government also funded two NGO-run shelters, one for adults and one providing specialized support for children. Foreign victims had access to the same services as domestic victims and were entitled to receive a renewable residence permit for a year. The government maintained temporary prevention efforts. However, it continued to delay the adoption of a national action plan.

The Republic of Croatia supports a developed world for everyone, where human trafficking should be extinct. In order to achieve this goal all nations should collaborate together and make a combined effort to detect cases of human trafficking, prosecute the culprits and mainly prevent future cases from occurring. As the culprits work beyond borders, the nations of the world shall unite in the combat against this crime. Putting together a resolution which tackles human trafficking on a global scale will certainly be a step in the right direction.