

Speech of Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic

Marshall Center, December 06, 2005

Mr. Deputy Foreign Minister Hasanovic and members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
General Schmalfeld and representatives of the Marshall Center,
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to take part in the opening of this conference on "**Regional Cooperation in Combating Illicit Trafficking.**" The **Marshall Center**, and the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** of the Government of Macedonia deserve our gratitude for having organized this program.

The presence here in Skopje today of so many senior officials and decision-makers demonstrates a **serious commitment** – particularly among the **Adriatic Charter** nations of Albania, Croatia and Macedonia – to identifying, confronting, halting and punishing illicit trafficking. Whether the trafficking is in persons, weapons, or narcotics.

Your program for the next three days is very full. Unfortunately, that is evidence not just that the program organizers wanted to fill every spare minute. It is a reflection of the growth of organized crime activities and of the awareness that they pose a serious threat to democracy itself.

The number of democratic, free-market governments has grown consistently, in Europe and around the world. Sadly, however, the very freedoms that characterize democracy and free markets can be -- and are being-- exploited by criminals. There is evidence that **transnational crime, corruption and violence are on the increase.** And it is equally clear that **trafficking undermines regional security, stability and economic development.**

I want to concentrate my remarks on a specific area of trafficking: the trafficking of human beings.

Your conference takes place at a particularly meaningful time of the year. November 25 was the first of the annual Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. Those 16 days are observed throughout the world in programs designed to call attention to, and ultimately put an end to, violence against women. The 16 days conclude on December 10 – Human Rights Day. Meanwhile, December 3 was the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.

I speak of these commemorations because, although women and girl children are most certainly not the only targets of trafficking, they are clearly among its most numerous and most vulnerable victims, particularly but not exclusively when sexual trafficking is involved.

No country, including my own, is immune from the cancer of illicit trafficking. By a conservative estimate, between 15,000 and 20,000 trafficked persons arrive in the United States each year.

World-wide, an estimated 600,000– 800,000 women, men and children are trafficked across international borders annually.

The victims of trafficking are forced into:

- **Prostitution**
- **Hard Labor**
- **Child Soldiering**
- **And other forms of involuntary servitude.**

Ending human trafficking is a high priority for the United States. Our government, law enforcement agencies, and citizens' organizations are taking **serious and concrete steps to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute** those who engage in trafficking. President George Bush and the Congress of the United States have both declared trafficking in persons "**one of the most important human rights issues of the 21st century.**"

Two years ago, President Bush signed the **National Security Presidential Directive** on Trafficking in Persons. In this directive, the President required the creation and implementation of a **strategic plan** to advance the fight against illicit trafficking.

Congress has done its part to curtail any role Americans may play in trafficking. As an example, Congress passed legislation that provides for the prosecution of U.S. citizens who patronize the sex tourism industry overseas.

And our Department of Defense has issued a zero-tolerance policy for U.S. military personnel. It states clearly that trafficking in persons "is **incompatible with military core values** and [must] not be facilitated in any way.

I am pleased to add that, just three days ago, in conjunction with the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, the United States joined 94 other countries in becoming an official party to the **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children**, also known as the **Palermo Protocol**.

The Palermo Protocol is an important achievement in the **worldwide effort to combat modern-day slavery**. It seeks to **prevent trafficking, protect victims, and promote anti-trafficking cooperation among nations**.

Since 2001, the U.S. Government has provided nearly 300 million dollars to support anti-trafficking programs in more than one hundred and twenty countries.

And, as most of you are aware, the State Department issues a report every year that **evaluates foreign governments' efforts** to combat illicit trafficking. This annual *Trafficking in Persons Report*, mandated by the United States Congress, records national and international progress on trafficking. It is the most **comprehensive annual global review** of human trafficking issued by any government, and it provides a **clear basis and incentive for taking serious action** when problems are identified.

A key question in preparing this report is: Is each government making significant progress in combating trafficking?

The report gives countries a tier (or level) rating, depending on how much or how little they are doing to overcome the problem of illicit trafficking:

- **Tier 1** countries **fully comply** with the minimum standards for the **prevention** of trafficking, **protection** of victims, and **prosecution** of criminals.
- **Tier 2** countries **do not fully comply** with the minimum standards in these three areas, but are **making significant efforts** to bring themselves into compliance.

- **The Tier 2 Watch List** includes countries that **require close attention** because of a **high or significantly increasing number of victims**; or a **failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts** to combat trafficking in persons.
- **Tier 3 countries do not satisfy the minimum standards, and do not demonstrate significant efforts** to come into compliance. Countries that remain on Tier 3 after a 90-day period can be sanctioned, and may lose non-humanitarian, non-trade assistance from the United States.

The report, and our diplomatic engagement with countries, is **demonstrating results**:

- Our efforts have contributed to the **prosecution of nearly eight thousand perpetrators** of trafficking crimes, resulting in **more than three thousand convictions**.
- During the last year, **thirty-nine countries enacted new anti-trafficking laws**. And **thirty-two additional countries** are in the process of **drafting or passing new anti-trafficking legislation**.

These are positive achievements for the victims. But they represent even more. They represent evidence nations' determination to resist the destructive effects that trafficking in persons, along with the corruption and organized crime associated with it, has on **security, stability and economic development**. Such **demonstrated national commitment** to combating trafficking systematically and effectively is also directly relevant to any country's **aspirations for integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions, such as NATO and the European Union**.

As you well know, because trafficking is transnational it must be defeated by **working jointly with other governments and international organizations**. In this effort, the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, and this conference – or rather what each of you and your governments does after the conference—can play a vital role.

Discussion is good -- but it is certainly not enough.

The **actions taken after this conference** will be **much more important**. To begin to defeat trafficking, it will require:

- strong political leadership,
- clear national action plans,
- appropriate legislation,
- sufficient resources,
- training of law enforcement and military personnel,
- efficient criminal justice systems, and
- programs to protect victims and witnesses.

The challenges are great, but they can be met through **decisive action**.

Again I thank you for your invitation, and I wish you a productive and successful conference.