Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 11562
10 April 2008

Ratification of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

Reply to Written question[1]: Written question No. 538 (Doc. 11445)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers thanks Mrs de Pourbaix–Lundin for her question which reflects her strong interest in action against trafficking in human beings and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings aimed at fighting this terrible phenomenon and serious violation of human rights. It thanks the Parliamentary Assembly for its active contribution to the preparatory work of this convention and for its commitment in the promotion of the convention's ratification by all the Council of Europe member states and non-member states.

2. The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the first European treaty in this field, is a comprehensive treaty focusing mainly on the protection of victims of trafficking and the safeguard of their rights. It also aims to prevent trafficking and to prosecute traffickers. In addition, the convention provides that an effective and independent monitoring mechanism be set up, which will be capable of controlling the implementation of the obligations contained in the convention.

3. During the Warsaw Summit, the heads of state and government firmly condemned trafficking in human beings as an offence to the dignity and integrity of the human being. They welcomed the opening for signature of the convention and they called for its widest possible ratification and swift entry into force.

4. In line with these commitments, in 2006 the Committee of Ministers launched the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings under the slogan "Human Being – Not for Sale". The campaign had two main aims. The first was to raise awareness of the problem of trafficking in human beings, as well as possible solutions to it, among governments, parliamentarians, local and regional authorities, NGOs and civil society. It also strived to instigate measures to protect the human rights of victims and prosecute the traffickers and their accomplices. The second aim was to promote the widest possible signature and ratification of the convention among member states and non-member states, in order that it may enter into force as soon as possible. To this end, targeted seminars and meetings of experts have taken place in many member states. These meetings provided the stakeholders concerned with the necessary technical assistance for drawing up or revising legislation in this area and assisted them to adopt the necessary measures for combating this scourge.

5. On 24 October 2007, the convention received its 10th ratification triggering the process by which it entered into force on 1 February 2008.[2]

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1. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 February 2008, at the 1017th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.
2. So far the convention has been ratified by the following Council of Europe member states (the convention is also open to non-member states): Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Georgia, Malta, Moldova, Norway, Romania and Slovakia. The convention has been signed by 23 other member states: Andorra, Armenia, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

6. The fight against trafficking calls for a multidisciplinary approach including prevention, protection of the rights of victims and prosecution of the traffickers as well as for joint action, as no country alone can defeat this new form of slavery. With this new Council of Europe convention, we have an innovative tool with the potential to make a significant contribution to prevent and combat trafficking all over Europe and beyond.

7. The Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings ended officially when the convention entered into force on 1 February 2008. However, in accordance with the Organisation's priorities set by the heads of state and government of the member states in the Action Plan adopted during the 3rd Summit, the Committee of Ministers will continue resolutely to promote the widest possible ratification of the convention among member and non-member states. The Council of Europe will provide states with legal and technical assistance for drawing up or revising national legislation and policies in conformity with the measures contained in the convention.

8. In this connection, a conference was held on 8 and 9 November 2007. It aimed to contribute to the setting up of the independent human rights monitoring mechanism of the Convention – the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), responsible for monitoring the implementation of the convention in the countries that have ratified it, as well as of the other pillar of the monitoring system – the Committee of the Parties. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the work done in this context and its contribution to the concrete implementation of the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.