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OSCE's "Combating Human
Trafficking" Signing

Istanbul, Turkey

11/18/99

**OSCE's "Combating Human Trafficking" Signing
Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton**

**Istanbul, Turkey
November 18, 1999**

Thank you so much. Thank you very much, Stana. I am delighted to be here with the delegates and the members of the NGO community—and so many other distinguished guests—to join all of you here for this important session at this very significant OSCE Summit, and just briefly to add my voice to those who have already spoken so eloquently this evening.

As I was listening to all of the speakers, I had a series of images running through my mind. I remember very well crouching down by the chair of a 12-year-old girl who had been sold into prostitution by her own parents who were desperate for the income that would come from that sale, only to find that the child returned home within a year, dying of AIDS. I've met other families who have stayed home nights worrying about what has happened to their daughters because they haven't heard from them since they went to the discotheque, or answered the ad to be a nanny or a clerk, or pursued some other economic opportunity that was offered.

We do, however, come together at a time when there is a growing global consensus, as we've already heard, that is not only taking place here in Europe and in the United States, but is finally reaching into many other parts of the globe. That consensus is a strong stand against the slavery that trafficking in human beings represents.

Here tonight we have presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers, lawmakers and NGOs—international organizations from all over the world. And I wish to thank the chairman for the work you have done and for the leadership that your country has provided on this very critical issue. I also wish to endorse the OSCE plan of action, which we have just heard described and which the United States strongly supports.

Shortly before we gathered on the stage, I met with representatives of the Austrian government. Austria is pledging to implement that plan of action when Austria assumes the chair of the OSCE in the coming months. And that is only appropriate, because I remember very well speaking about human rights and their particular application to the scourge that trafficking represents at our first Vital Voices meeting—"Women in Democracy"—that was held in July of 1997 in Vienna, where women leaders from throughout Eastern and Central Europe came together to share their concerns and to hopefully come to some understanding of how they could work to meet those concerns and challenges.

Many of those represented there—from both government and NGOs, from both the public and the private sectors—shared their deep concern about the issue of

trafficking. They told us in great detail how so many women in their countries were desperate for economic opportunities and how they thought they were following their dreams when they left their countries of origin to seek a better future, they believed, only to find themselves in a nightmare—imprisoned by employers and often never seen or heard from again.

Those voices, though, were heard when we all traveled to Iceland last month for another Vital Voices conference. There were many Baltic and Nordic and Russian women leaders present. And again the issue of trafficking was raised, most dramatically raised by the President of Latvia in her memorable address. But it wasn't just to wring our hands and trade the terrible stories we knew, but instead to develop and commit ourselves to strategies. Because in the last several years, the trafficking of girls and women had finally come out of the shadows and moved into the spotlight and the glare of attention that we hope will lead to the strategies you've heard discussed actually being implemented.

In March of 1988, the United States government, through the President, announced an anti-trafficking strategy focussing on what we call "the three p's"—prevention, protection and prosecution. Prevention means, as we've heard, the education and empowerment of women so they do not fall prey to trafficking. Protection means addressing the human rights of the victims and offering the assistance that they require. And prosecution means doing more than we have done so far. One percent of the 180,000 cases leading to prosecution is, we all know, much too low. We have to use the full force of the law to root out those criminal networks that profit from trafficking.

To accomplish the goals that the United States has set, we have put our federal government to work, led by our Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, but also including other departments and agencies, including Labor, Justice, and Health and Human Services. We are working with our Congress to develop the legislation necessary for the United States to take the action we know we should. We've also developed partnerships with other governments, including Italy, Finland, and Ukraine. In some cases, we are working together to protect victims. In others, we are using our resources to help put into place education campaigns.

I'm very pleased to announce this evening that our government plans to dedicate \$1 million to combat trafficking in the OSCE region. With the approval of Congress, these funds will be available to help girls and women in the coming months. The government of Norway will be hosting a gathering next spring to talk about what we have accomplished and how much more work we have to do. I hope that by next spring we will be able to look back at this meeting, and the ones that have preceded it, and be able to mark the progress that has occurred.

I hope we will say that we have finally, in all of our governments, put the laws on the books that we need to prevent this crime. I hope we will be able to say that we have provided resources to empower the NGOs, like La Strada, that are on the front lines protecting women and girls from the abuse of trafficking. I hope we will be able to say

that in all of our countries our criminal justice systems now take this issue of trafficking seriously and are putting resources to work in order to prosecute the perpetrators. And I also hope we will have committed ourselves to even greater efforts to remove the causes that lead young women to leave their homes of origin by working to ensure more economic opportunities—through microcredit, through changes in the economic structures and the opening of markets—in all of our countries. And I hope that we will take a strong stand on behalf of the social justice concerns that underlie the issue of trafficking.

I also hope that we will have moved closer to achieving a consensus in the United Nations on an anti-trafficking protocol. We have work to do, those of us in the United States and in Europe, to persuade other nations throughout the world that the trafficking of women and girls is not a custom, is not an inevitable part of fate that affects some and not others, but is, instead, an international crime. If we do so, then we will be able to require all participating countries that signed the protocol to punish the perpetrators and protect the victims.

There is much that we can do together. We come from source countries, from transit countries, from destination countries; but all of us have a role to play in translating the extraordinary and eloquent statements we have heard from this podium into the actions that each of us must be committed to take. I look forward to learning more about the progress that we can make together, and looking for ways that all of us—in government, NGOs, communities—can continue to stand against trafficking and stand for the fundamental human rights of every single citizen.

Thank you all very much.