

**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
DELIVERED BY MONSIGNOR MAURO LALLI**

AT THE 2022 OSCE MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE

**“ADVANCING SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: FOSTERING
DIALOGUE WITH THE OSCE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION”**

DEAD SEA, JORDAN, 24-25 OCTOBER 2022

**Session II:
Leveraging the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership
to combat the trafficking in human beings.**

Mr. Chairman,

Pope Francis, in his Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, stressed that “trafficking in persons and other contemporary forms of enslavement are a worldwide problem that needs to be taken seriously by humanity as a whole.”¹ There are an estimated 25 million victims of trafficking in the world. That is an appalling figure. More worrisome is that the number of identified child victims has tripled in the last 15 years.² This pervasive crime has infected every corner of the globe and has only been aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the current war in Ukraine.

Sadly, human trafficking affects States all around the Mediterranean. Migration routes through the region are often used by traffickers to trap and enslave victims along the way toward their final destinations. In fact, migrants are often in a situation of both social and economic vulnerability, which can easily expose them to exploitative conditions – such as sexual or labour exploitation. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen all measures directed at preventing exploitation of people as well as at providing remedy for the victims of trafficking in these countries of origin, transit, and destination.

In this sense, collaboration between Mediterranean countries is decisive in fighting human trafficking effectively. With this in mind, the Holy See considers it extremely important that: “States [should] share relevant information on human trafficking with other States, and develop joint responses in terms of prevention, protection and prosecution. Greater cooperation is needed, as well as the provision of technical and other assistance to countries all along the human trafficking routes. In order to be effective, cooperation and coordination must also involve civil society, faith-based organisations and religious leaders as well as the business sector and media.”³

¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 24.

² https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/3/525273_1.pdf, p.4.

³ Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking, Rome 2019, p. 28.

Along the same lines, Pope Francis affirms that, “to be indifferent to or ignore human trafficking and modern-day slavery would be [equal] to becom[ing] an accomplice to those crimes.”⁴ Indeed, a significant number of religious organizations provide assistance to those in need, managing to gain the trust of trafficking victims, who are often reluctant to approach public institutions and law enforcement. This is of particular significance as victims can provide crucial information on criminal networks and help bring them to justice. Therefore, legislation must also be continuously adapted to keep pace with the evolution of this horrendous phenomenon. In this regard, it is essential that public, private, and religious institutions work together to help protect our fellow human beings from becoming or remaining victims of trafficking in violation of their dignity and fundamental human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, my Delegation would like to underline the importance of cooperation in the Mediterranean, the *mare nostrum*. As Pope Francis has noted “our sea that connects so many countries, urges us to sail together and not to separate following different paths.”⁵ This seems particularly pertinent as we work together to end this vile crime.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

⁴ Pope Francis, Prayer intention for the month of February 2019.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Video message on the occasion of his upcoming apostolic journey to Cyprus and Greece* [2-6 December 2021], 27 November 2021.