



ROUND TABLE OF BUSINESS COMMUNITY AGAINST THE TRAFFICKING OF HUMAN BEINGS

Final Report

23 January 2006, Zappeion Megaron, Athens, Greece



Under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Co-sponsored by DCAF, IOM, UNIFEM, UNODC, World Bank,

Foundation for the Child and the Family

Hosted by





END HUMAN TRAFFICKING NOW

Final Report
of the
Athens Roundtable of the Business Community
against the Trafficking of Human Beings

Athens, 23 January 2006



Athens Ethical Principles

(adopted and signed in Athens, 23 January 2006)

We,

Members of the business community,

Being deeply concerned that the scourge of trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, inflicts enormous suffering in the world today,

Consider unacceptable that millions of people are treated as commodities and slaves, and therefore denied their basic human rights and dignity,

Welcome the efforts of the international community to eradicate human trafficking, including through public-private partnership, and envisage this initiative as an additional means to complement and reinforce such efforts,

Recognize the significant potential of the business community to contribute to the global fight against human trafficking, and inspired by business community members who are already applying ethical policies and codes of conducts concerning human rights,

Dissociate ourselves from such illicit practices by launching the following ethical principles in which we will:

- 1. Explicitly demonstrate the position of zero tolerance towards trafficking in human beings, especially women and children for sexual exploitation.***
- 2. Contribute to prevention of trafficking in human beings including awareness-raising campaigns and education***
- 3. Develop a corporate strategy for an anti-trafficking policy which will permeate all our activities.***
- 4. Ensure that our personnel fully comply with our anti-trafficking policy.***
- 5. Encourage business partners, including suppliers, to apply ethical principles against human trafficking.***
- 6. In an effort to increase enforcement it is necessary to call on governments to initiate a process of revision of laws and regulations that are directly or indirectly related to enhancing anti-trafficking policies.***
- 7. Report and share information on best practices.***

ATHENS ROUNDTABLE OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AGAINST THE TRAFFICKING OF HUMAN BEINGS

The roundtable was held under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cosponsored by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), and the Foundation for the Child and Family, in cooperation with Motor Oil.

In total 120 participants attended comprised of 41 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) from the business companies from various regions; eminent personalities such as H.R.H. Queen Silvia of Sweden, H.H. Shaikha Sabika Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, wife of the King of Bahrain, representatives of cosponsors, international intergovernmental organisations (including Interpol), nongovernmental organisations, several ministers from the Greek cabinet, and artists, including musician Jean-Michel Jarre. Welcoming remarks were given by H.E. Suzanne Mubarak and Ms. Vardinoyannis. The roundtable was moderated by Ms. Lyse Doucet, from the BBC and Ms. Zohreh Tabatabai, the Director of Communication of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The first part of the meeting focused on the scale and extent of the problem of human trafficking, especially women and children, its causes; national experiences in anti-trafficking combat; international law responses, including law enforcement strategies; the role of the business community, public private partnership, and the utility of a code of behaviour. The debate contributed significantly to awareness-raising, especially that many representatives from the business community acknowledged that they were not aware of the gravity of human trafficking.

It was highlighted that

- human trafficking had become the third largest criminal industry in the world in the last years;
- approximately 2.4 million people were trafficked across international borders annually, with women and children constituting the largest proportion being trafficked;
- the lack of opportunities in the home countries (poverty, social exclusion, unemployment, discrimination) and insufficient public awareness were among the main causes of people's vulnerability to trafficking;
- the demand within the sex industry has increased enormously making vulnerable young women and children its primary targets. This is illustrated by a study of internet users of sexually explicit websites which has reached approximately 35 million users. Such websites represent 12 percent of all existing websites and 35 percent of internet downloads making it a major economic success;
- tremendous profits were generated from human trafficking estimated to be over US\$ 31 billion per year, including US\$ 28 billion from forced sexual exploitation;
- law enforcement has very limited human resources devoted to anti-trafficking efforts and penalties are minimal;
- reaching out to victims was very difficult because of their fear of being deported, of retaliation from traffickers, little access to communicate with the 'outside world' and language barriers.

Although the primary *obligation* to prevent and combat human trafficking lies with national governments, the business community has a vital role to play – not only in mobilizing the world community for action but assuming the leadership role in the process. In order to ensure the

sustained involvement of the business community it was agreed that a business plan be elaborated in which specific benchmarks, timeframe, actors, users, etc. are identified. This specificity will enable each enterprise to contribute to the overall plan.

Examples of the type of activities the business community might take on board were given, such as:

- the provision of resources for awareness raising or education;
- the creation of job opportunities in high risk countries, such as the opening of jobs within existing companies; and training and education for vulnerable people in source countries;
- supporting services for victims, e.g. shelters, hot lines, etc.;
- lobbying governments and supporting them in fulfilling their obligations towards preventing and combating human trafficking and protecting its victims;
- adopting a code of conduct as a useful tool because
 - it gives a clear signal that a company is involved in ethical business;
 - it increases the reputation of the company – the code being the most valuable asset protecting stakeholders and shareholders;
 - through the training of its employees, it mitigates risks that a company may engage in undesirable or illegal activities;
 - it creates in employees a feeling of pride to be part of a company that adheres to principles and values that protect the dignity of human beings.

Based on the above, the second part of the meeting was devoted to the discussion of the draft ethical principles, which was concluded with few modifications and entitled the ‘Athens Ethical Principles’.

Follow-up action was discussed extensively by the business community. Consensus was reached namely to elaborate a business plan by a small Working Group coordinated by EHTN Elements of an action plan (see box) were also identified and together with suggestions submitted at a later stage, they constitute ideas which can be further elaborated by the working group. These are contained in the ‘Follow-up actions’ below. The important point is to act swiftly and concretely to keep the momentum.

The closing ceremony was resonant with the strong collaboration with the business community that was developed all throughout the meeting. In her closing remarks, H.E. Suzanne Mubarak emphasised the challenge in ensuring that the Athens Ethical Principles become powerful tools in launching the campaign to end human trafficking. The present cooperation, she stated, was a significant step in mobilising the public at large and increasing awareness in all sectors of society which are vital in preventing human trafficking from flourishing.

Elements of an Action Plan

The following are elements of the action plan suggested during the roundtable:

1. Prevention

Activities to be implemented would include:

- **Awareness-raising** – investing in awareness raising and consciousness of a general public aimed at securing its active involvement in anti-trafficking efforts (e.g. production of video clips, TV programmes, posters, etc.);
- **educational and training programmes** – support such programmes especially for women and children in the source countries;
- **creation of job opportunities** in countries where businesses are operating, especially to potential and actual victims of trafficking (focused training for recruits, job training, etc.) thereby illustrating the commitment of enterprises to channel back a little of their profits to the countries themselves.

2. Advocacy

- lobbying governments to adopt/amend laws and policies related to trafficking and strengthen their implementation;
- supporting governments and non-governmental organisations by providing resources and expertise for drafting legislation and its implementation;
- promoting the Athens Ethical Principles.

3. Support for international organisations dealing with anti-trafficking programmes

- providing funds and other assistance to international institutions involved in preventing and combating human trafficking, including law enforcement organisations, such as Interpol.

4. Follow-up by the End Human Trafficking Now (EHTN) campaign

EHTN will be responsible for coordinating and facilitating the follow-up activities above including:

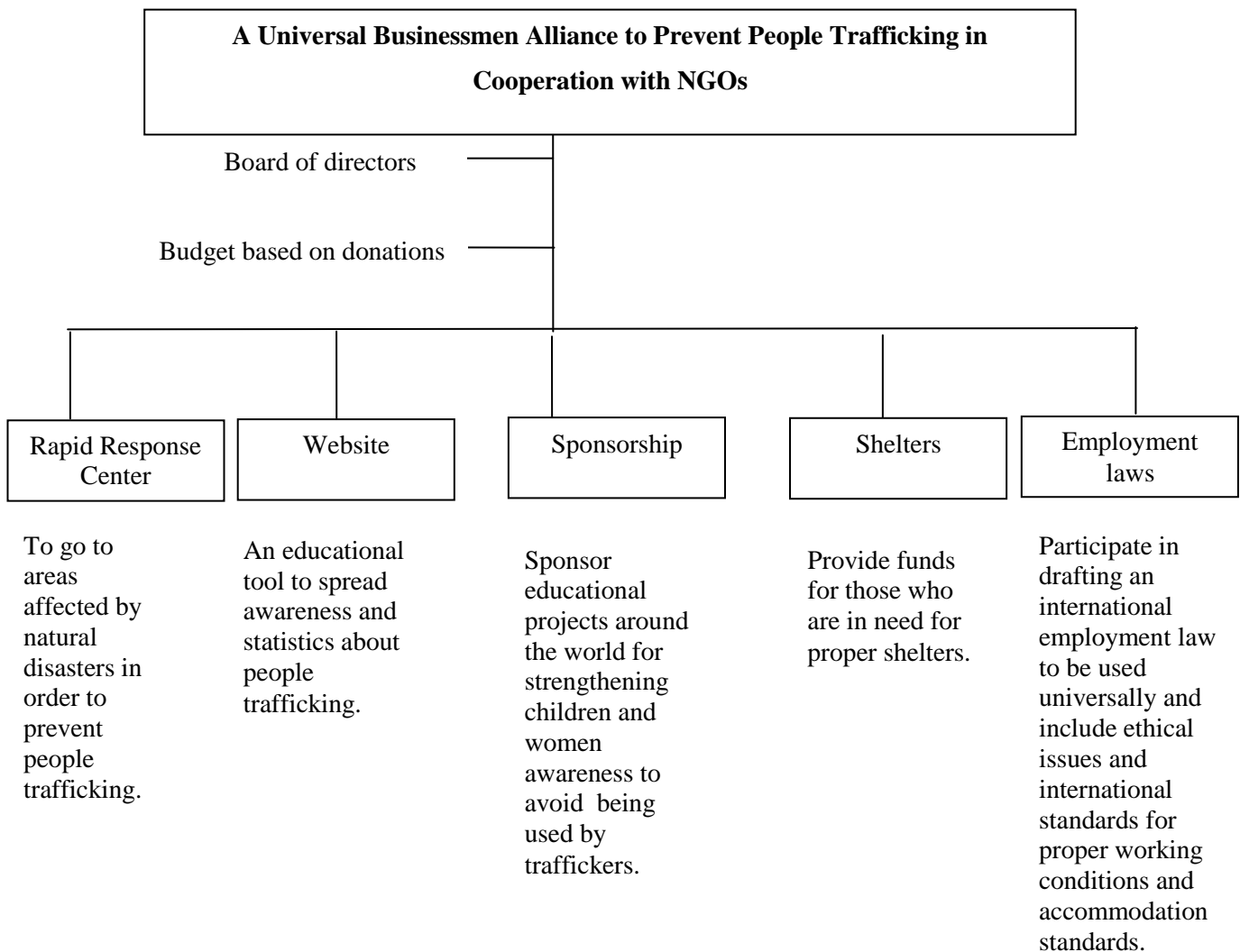
- Coordinating the Working Group composed of CEOs who will elaborate a business plan. See paragraph under ‘Follow up actions’ for specific suggestions made by participants for consideration;
- Promoting and publicising the Athens Ethical Principles and soliciting new signatures;
- Collecting information and inputs for follow-up actions, including information concerning the implementation of the ethical principles and good practices, and disseminating them.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

1. Suggestions received from participants

Upon completion of the Athens Roundtable, EHTN was informed about suggestions for implementation of the Athens Ethical Principles. Some of these proposals are illustrated below and shall be submitted to the Working Group. EHTN also received information on specific initiatives undertaken by individual participants. These will be contained in a *Newsletter* which will be issued shortly bringing participants up-to-date with progress made. Participants are encouraged to share with EHTN all ideas and initiatives which will be communicated regularly to all partners.

i. A Universal Businessmen Alliance to Prevent People Trafficking in Cooperation with NGOs



ii. Work scheme for the implementation of the Athens Ethical Principles

A work scheme for the implementation of the Athens Ethical Principles was proposed which entails the following:

- specifying **objectives** with clear indicators (i.e. reduction by x percent of human trafficking)
- outlining a clear-cut **strategy** for the implementation of each of the ethical principles (i.e. awareness-raising of potential victims and the public)

2. World Economic Forum, Davos (27 – 28 January 2006)

i. Reception hosted by Manpower

On 27 January, a reception was hosted by Manpower in honour of H.E. Suzanne Mubarak. It was attended by a very wide audience from leading personalities and more than 200 CEOs. Mr. David Arkless shared with participants the commitment of Manpower to the global campaign against human trafficking and the Athens Ethical Principles. He gave a heartfelt message which resonated profoundly with the audience. H.E. Suzanne Mubarak gave a thought-provoking address in which she briefly explained the human trafficking problem within its global context requiring a global solution and the commitment and support of all. She pointed out that it was only through a global campaign that such a horrific problem which appears to be insurmountable will be brought under control and eliminated. She invited all present to join the international campaign that was launched in Athens. Words of support and solidarity were expressed by leading nongovernmental organisations, such as Vital Voices, intergovernmental organisations, such as the ILO and representatives of the business community. The reception offered an excellent opportunity of networking especially between those who attended the Athens roundtable and those interested to know more in order to join the campaign. Many more signatures to the Athens Ethical Principles and support were obtained.

ii. Panel on illicit trade

On 28 January, the panel on illicit trade discussed various aspects related to this issue. The book *Illicit* by Moises Naim was considered an excellent publication which treated the dynamics of this trade, its implications and how it might be contained. Similarities between illicit trade that is operating worldwide in arms, drugs and human beings were discussed but at the same time, the trafficking of human beings was considered of a different order. H.E. Suzanne Mubarak shared the specific features of this criminal activity for unlike drugs and other commodities it was found that human beings were sold and resold over and over again. It had devastating effects on its victims which were grossly underplayed, such as HIV/AIDS, a global pandemic which the international community is determined to fight against. Her Excellency also described the disconnect between the magnitude of the problem affecting between 800'000 – 2.4 million people trafficked annually and the actions taken to bring to justice those responsible for these criminal acts. Only 3000 persons were prosecuted with penalties ranging from 3 month to 7 years of imprisonment. Many other interventions were made namely on the importance of good governance, public perception of crime and other related issues. Upon completion of the session, it was agreed that the book *Illicit* would be translated into Arabic to make it widely available in the region, and offers were made to provide all those present with a copy of this book as well as the book *Trafficking Women and Children – Overcoming the Illegal Sex Trade* prepared by Oxford University. There was a general consensus that in a few years from now, a progress report would be made on the status of the campaign to eliminate the trafficking of human beings to the World Economic Forum. The roundtable was reported in many of the news channels and is available in the World Economic Forum website.

3. World Economic Forum, Sharm El Sheikh (May 2006)

Follow-up action on the campaign will take place in the forthcoming World Economic Forum in Sharm El Sheikh in May 2006. All opportunities will be used to bring this campaign to the attention of the world community as an essential means to mobilize world opinion and increase global action.

Press coverage

Media coverage was extensive during the Athens Roundtable and the events at the World Economic Forum in Davos. Two press conferences were organized on 18 and 23 January 2006 in connection with the roundtable. They were well attended and showed the interest of local and international media on this issue. In addition, a press release was distributed in Davos and is available in the End Human Trafficking Now website. Newspaper clippings are being prepared into a small report that will be sent to participants under a separate cover.

End Human Trafficking Now

7 February 2006



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

**Athens Roundtable of the
Business Community against the
Trafficking of Human Beings
23 January 2006**

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Mrs Marianna Vardinoyannis	Board Member, The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement
H.R.H. Queen Silvia of Sweden	
H.H. Sheika Sabika Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa	Member, The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Board
Mr Abdulla Janahi Khalid	Chief Executive, Dar Al Maal Al Islami Trust
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