



Remarks at Russian Trafficking In Persons Conference

Secretary Colin L. Powell
 Presidential Administration Building
 Moscow, Russia
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SECRETARY POWELL: (Inaudible) I speak for all the members of my traveling party, but beyond that I speak for the President of the United States, and I speak for the American people when I applaud the humanity, the vision, and the determination of the organizers of this event.

To the leaders of this event -- Mr. Poltavchenko, Ms. Mizulina, and to your colleagues -- I extend our deepest thanks and I extend to you our pledge of partnership. Let me say in that regard that I am very proud of the role that the U.S. Embassy has played in supporting Russia's anti-trafficking efforts during the last year. My friends, with this initiative that you have taken, and you manifest here today, to fight the crime of human trafficking, you have built a pathway to a better future for so many, for all of Russian society.

It is impossible for me not to feel strong emotion whenever I think about the victims of the crime of trafficking in persons -- whether the victims are forced into prostitution, into slave labor, or into being child soldiers. As President Bush said before the United Nations General Assembly on September 23 of last year, "There is a special evil in the abuse and exploitation of the most innocent, the most vulnerable of our fellow human beings." The President was absolutely right.

The criminals who perpetrate these crimes deliberately exploit the weak and the defenseless: the poor, the young, the destitute, and many who are alone, totally cut off from the support of family and friends. I am unable to understand how some people can treat other human beings as such objects. How can anyone seek to profit from the misery and the humiliation of others, without the slightest pangs of conscience?

But we shouldn't dwell long on the darker mysteries of human nature, because we have work to do. Trafficking in persons is immoral and intolerable and because it is an international phenomenon, often linked to other transnational criminal activities, the world must come together to put a stop to it -- just as the world must come together to put a stop to other immoral and intolerable acts, like international terrorism.

And put a stop to trafficking, we will. We will stop the criminals who ply this terrible trade and help its victims -- we will help the victims of this terrible trade recover their lives. We will shame the patrons, the customers of these sordid industries, who debase themselves and cause pain to others. And we will pressure governments that tolerate such activities on their soil.



The United States and Russia are both vulnerable to the crimes of trafficking in persons, and both countries have recognized and responded to this very, very tragic and serious problem. Russia has passed strong anti-trafficking legislation, and we hope more such legislation will be forthcoming. President Putin has left no doubt about where he stands personally. As he said on October 27th, "Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery that entails the most brutal and cruel violations of human rights." The legislation that was passed must now be enforced, so that more innocent victims are not created, even as we help those who have already been victimized.

As you know, a major factor behind trafficking is prostitution. And that is why we appreciate that your proposed legislation on victim assistance does not legalize the activities of the traffickers. The pimp and the client both exploit the victim, and so both must be held accountable. To defeat the criminals who prey on the innocent and the helpless, we must be creative and flexible. Governments must act, but they cannot solve the problem by themselves. Governments must build partnerships with each other, and governments must also build partnerships within their own societies, fostering cooperation between governmental entities and non-governmental entities.

Governments and organizations of civil society must fight corruption, for corruption is the knob that opens the door to trafficking. Thanks to this meeting, thanks to this assembly, these partnerships will be forged and they'll be forged in strength here in Russia. Proper housing and care will be given to the victims of horrible trafficking crimes. And you will work, too, on housing for the criminals -- the kind of housing that criminals like least -- this kind of housing we call prisons, with sturdy steel bars and sturdy locks to keep them from preying on the defenseless any longer.

Governments working with each other, with their business sectors, and with NGOs will solve this problem, by both summoning compassion and by seeking justice. We have triumphed over inhumane and unfair practices before, and we can do it again if we take the lesson of these experiences. That lesson is clear: new norms are established only when responsible parties use their joint power to enforce them. Enforcement is the key. Good intention is not enough.

To former victims among us, who have now gotten your lives back, I want to tell you something: I know that you have been brave as you have suffered through this crime, as brave as any soldier. Your bravery helps you to survive the degradation that you experienced. I urge all of you now to use your courage to help others. It's not just governments and NGOs we need in this battle. We need each of you, as well.

You know what you need to do in this assembly. Your agenda is clear. You must make this national assembly work to coordinate the activity of NGOs and government. You are taking a genuinely revolutionary step today. And that step, if successful, will provide a model for NGOs and government agencies in other countries that are struggling with this problem. Once firmly established, this assembly must help pass additional legislation protecting victims of trafficking and sexual violence, pass witness protection legislation, develop a national referral mechanism, and aggressively prosecute traffickers and the corrupt government officials who protect them.

I hope that you will also turn your attention to the problem of forced labor -- a practice that is no less sinister or deadly than sex trafficking, but one that has received far less public attention than it deserves. All of these forms of trafficking must be dealt with. The United States Government, and especially the United States Congress, has a very serious interest in this issue. Legislation has been passed in our Congress. I am required by my legislation to report on a regular basis what we are doing with respect to trafficking. I am required to report on what other countries are doing with respect to trafficking

and grade those countries. And to take action if we see countries that are not moving aggressively to deal with this crime.

I don't know how many of you have had a chance to see on television or to read in magazines some of the stories that these victims of trafficking tell. There was a television program in America just a week ago that described child sex prostitution in Asia. It was painful to watch, you wanted to cry, you wanted to cry and reach out and grab these young people who have been so badly exploited by these evil, evil men and women who took them in, forced them to undergo the most horrible degradation imaginable. Children: five, six, seven years old. We see this problem manifest itself in so many different ways around the world. No one is safe, no society is safe, no society is immune, all societies must come together to deal with this deadly problem.

And so I'm pleased to have this opportunity to share these thoughts with you and to let you know that the United States is with you in spirit, but also in practical terms, working together to stop the trafficking, working together to solve a means of fighting this and sharing ideas about legislation, sharing ideas about mobilizing the civil society. In the United States, you have an ally and a friend in a new war, a war against trafficking, a war to defeat traffickers, to rescue, save and rehabilitate the victims. In the United States of America, you have a friend.

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