

**Speech by Alexis Loeber  
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*Information session on the Directorate General of General Security's efforts on  
Combatting Trafficking*

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*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

Excellencies,

Representatives of the ministries and security agencies involved in anti-trafficking,

International Organisation for Migration Colleagues,

Dear Friends,

Human trafficking is unacceptable in every sense of the word. It is a gross human rights violation. It is an extremely serious form of crime. It harms its victims, often the most vulnerable in our societies who deserve our commitment to protect them.

At a time when growing numbers of victims are being identified in Lebanon, in the region but also in Europe, we must send a loud and clear signal that we will not let their suffering continue; a signal that we are all working to address human trafficking.

The European Union's policy for addressing trafficking in human beings is comprehensive, focusing on prevention, the protection of victims, the prosecution of criminals, and on developing partnerships with the various actors

involved. This approach is human rights based, victims centred, gender specific and child sensitive.

A lot has been achieved but a huge amount of work remains to be done to address the issue of human trafficking. It is a very complex and often transnational phenomenon. And this is where the collaboration of all present here is essential: security agencies, ministries, the international community and civil society organisations. We can only address human trafficking effectively if we work together, consistently and systematically. We have to equally focus on preventing human trafficking from happening, on prosecuting the traffickers, and, most importantly, on ensuring that victims are protected, assisted and reintegrated into society.

In Lebanon the Anti-Trafficking law 164 passed in August 2011 criminalising human trafficking. This is a positive step since it provides a clear definition of trafficking in line with UN protocol, it defines victims of trafficking without differentiating between nationals and non-nationals, and it sets stringent penalties for traffickers.

However there is still room for improvement in order to strengthen provisions on protection, prevention, prosecution and collaboration. It also needs to be highlighted that only by addressing all forms of exploitation, including forced labour, can we meaningfully address trafficking in human beings.

We all know that passing legislation is not enough. There must be a purposeful, focused, continual effort to effectively implement those laws. In this sense, I welcome the committee recently created within the General Security working on developing procedures and guidelines to enforce the law.

Allow me to say a few words on a particular vulnerable group when it comes to trafficking: migrant workers.

We all know that migrants can make very powerful contributions to our societies, including in Lebanon. Labour migration is a growing phenomenon that involves millions of workers moving within their own countries or abroad. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates the population of foreign migrant workers to be 120 million.

We are also painfully aware that the situation of migrant workers and their families has become a critical contemporary human rights issue worldwide: Exploitation by traffickers; employers; people smugglers; extremely difficult working and living conditions; lack of access to justice, and discrimination, just to name a few. And Lebanon is not an exception.

The treatment of migrant workers in general and of female domestic migrant workers in particular in Lebanon is an area of immediate and urgent concern for us. We relentlessly addressed this issue in the framework of our political dialogue with Lebanese authorities, but also through direct financial assistance to organisations that raise awareness about their situation, propose legislations to improve the legal framework, and support individuals facing exploitation on a case-by-case basis.

The European Union has repeatedly called on the Lebanese authorities to ensure that migrant workers be subject to the Lebanese labour laws, which would protect their rights, put an end to the de facto sponsorship (kafala) system, and improve their access to legal redress mechanisms.

We also believe that it is fundamental to collaborate with the judiciary to reduce impunity for abuses and to develop case laws that promote the rights of migrants and of victims of trafficking.

Allow me also to say that the EU is extremely concerned about the situation of foreigners in detention in Lebanon, particularly migrant workers. Stigmatising a person who migrates irregularly in hope of a better life as a criminal is contrary to established principles in international law and ethics. Moreover, it is superficial, ill-founded and counter-productive given that it leaves untouched the root causes of migration.

The European Union calls on all stakeholders to work without delay on a comprehensive and "multidisciplinary" solution, in order to put in place adequate legal protection for victims of trafficking, to effectively address the issue, and to develop and enforce effective policies that ensure the rights of migrant workers at all times.

We will also continue to provide substantial support to help improve the situation of migrant workers in Lebanon, at policy level and through support to civil society organisations involved in promoting and protecting the rights of the most vulnerable.

Let me conclude by thanking all of you for your presence here: the General Security for holding this discussion and for the efforts deployed to fight against the trafficking of human beings; the dedicated team of IOM headed by Fawzi Alzioud in Lebanon, namely Nur Fitriana and Dima Haddad, without whose engagement, commitment and professionalism victims of trafficking and migrant workers would have been even more vulnerable.

Thank you.