



Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women



PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

To: *H.E. Mr. Jose Manuel BARROSO*
President of the European Commission

Brussels, 3 May 2007

Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings: Ratification by European Commission!

Dear Mr. Barroso,

Today is the second anniversary of the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* (2005), one of the most important instruments of combating the dramatic human rights violation which trafficking represents. Over 150 NGO's and civil society organisations in 10 countries across Europe are taking this day as the opportunity to, once again remind their governments that the Convention still needs more ratifications in order to enter into force!

We - the signatories to this letter - are independent international umbrella organisations. Our members and national branches are combating trafficking at grass roots level by providing direct assistance to those who are affected by the crime of human trafficking. Many of our members are part of broad coalitions, often between governmental and non-governmental actors. Our organisations have contributed to the fight against trafficking on European and international level, providing evidence-based, critical but supportive contributions. We support the Convention, for it is the only legally binding instrument that contains provisions that focus on the human rights of trafficked persons and offers **effective protection** to trafficked persons, rather than being exclusively an instrument for combating organised crime.

We believe that the Council of Europe Convention strengthens the human rights of people affected by the crime of human trafficking, sets out standards to protect the rights of trafficked persons and offers policy guidance to Party States. The Convention therefore offers a good addition to the rights and obligations set out in the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* -

The EU institutions and the European Commission in particular have given specific attention to the fight against trafficking, not least by enshrining the fight against trafficking in Article 5 of the Charter of Fundamental rights. The Council Framework decision of 19th July 2002 as well as the establishment of an expert group of the European Commission on Trafficking in Human Beings are further signs of the EU's commitment against trafficking. The European Commission has in this context participated in the negotiation of the Council of Europe Convention, in decisions of June and a common position of October 2004 explicitly mandated the Commission to negotiate the Council of Europe Convention. Consequently the EU Action Plan against trafficking in human beings in Point 1.3.c, envisages that the Member States consider signature and ratification of the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* as priority. The action plan commits the Commission and the States to review the state of play with respect to ratification/conclusion by each Member State by the end of 2007.

We welcome these commitments made by the European Commission and member states. At the same time we believe that the process of signature and ratification has to be supported at the high political level to catalyze the speedy enactment of the Convention.

We would encourage the Commission to take the necessary steps towards the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention, by acting as Commission of the European Communities for those provisions relating to Community law as well as those provisions covered by the Council's common position of 25th October 2004 (relating to third pillar provisions), so that the European Commission would become party to this very important human rights convention.

We count on your continued demonstration of support in the fight against trafficking in human beings by taking decisive action for the European Commission to become a Party to this Convention.

The representatives of the undersigned organisations would be most obliged if you or your representatives would in the near future find the time for a meeting to discuss synergies between EU institutions and non-governmental actors in the fight against trafficking.

Sincerely,

La Strada International
Terre Des Hommes, International federation
Plan
Anti Slavery International
Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)
Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)

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