

Press Release

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Council of Europe: Italy and other countries committed to ratify the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

Rome, 24.10.2006 – Italy and several other countries intend to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in order that it may enter into force as soon as possible. This was the conclusion of a two-day seminar in Rome organised by the Council of Europe and sponsored by the Italian Department of Rights and Equal Opportunities.

The seminar was attended by over 150 delegates from Italy, Albania, Greece, Malta, Portugal, Spain and Turkey, including government representatives, parliamentarians, NGO representatives and representatives of the Italian regions. The Italian government was represented by the Minister for Rights and Equal Opportunities, Barbara Pollastrini, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly by Senator Andrea Manzella and the Council of Europe by Director Jan Kleijssen of the Directorate General of Human Rights.

The seminar will help to speed up ratification of the Convention by various countries, as it provided an opportunity for an exchange of views on the main provisions of the Convention and national legislation and measures to fight this scourge. Three countries (Austria, Moldova and Romania) have so far ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. 30 other countries have already signed the Convention.

The Convention is the first European treaty to protect and promote the human rights of victims of trafficking. In this respect, the Council of Europe experts pointed out the need to clearly differentiate between the victims of trafficking, illegal immigration and prostitution. For example, a foreign woman sexually exploited by a gang of criminals is in many countries still considered as an illegal immigrant. Rather than receiving assistance and protection so that she can escape from the traffickers and the people responsible can be caught with her help, she is considered as an offender and sent back to her own country, despite being a victim of trafficking.

There was consensus at the Rome seminar on the need for all the countries in Europe to ratify the Convention as soon as possible, in order to make the fight against trafficking in human beings and co-operation among the various states much more effective. The Council of Europe, with its 46 European member states, is an organisation which includes countries of origin of victims, transit countries and destination countries.

The Rome seminar will be followed by one in Oslo (1-2 November) and another in Athens (5-6 December).

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 46 member states.