

VALERIYA

GOODWILL ENVOY FOR  
THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM)  
IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Welcome Remarks

International Dialogue on Migration  
Intersessional Workshop on

Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation of Migrants:  
Ensuring Protection of Human Rights  
9-10 July 2009

Hello Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all I want to thank you for inviting me. I've been collaborating with IOM for about two years and I'd like to tell you why it is important to me.

I always respond easily to taking part in various charity events or actions. Being a mother of three, I see many problems from that point of view.

In 2007 I was visited by the Mission of IOM in the Russian Federation to take part in shooting a counter-trafficking television spot, telling the young people and society in Russia that trafficking exists not somewhere far away but among us, calling upon people to be more careful with their lives and lives of close ones.

We started our joint work with great enthusiasm and by now have released several versions of short television reels, which have been broadcasting through main television channels in Russia and on the internet.

Before I joined IOM I hadn't know much about trafficking issues. I heard something but I'd never imagined that this problem is so widespread everywhere.

I presume that it's always easier to prevent a problem than to fight it.

Sometimes we – artists, actors, musicians – are able to bring more attention to various social problems than officials or politicians. We speak the language of emotions and human feelings. The power of music and entertainment is able to combat indifference in society, affect positive changes in the world.

Last year I participated in the forum of the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) in Vienna. I must say that it was very useful to me, I learned a lot about trafficking. Many people took the floor but I remember the words of the one who said "Now we know too much for living the same way we lived before the forum."

IOM provides medical and psychological assistance to the victims of human trafficking – young women, who suffered from sexual exploitation, young men – victims of forced labour, and many others.

I meet these people, talk to them. I'm not a professional psychologist but I'm sure I can help people with my own experience. My life wasn't easy, I suffered from

domestic abuse for 10 years. I was forced to work for a man who was my husband and treated me like his slave. I had no rights, I got no money for my hard work, I couldn't move a finger without his approval.

I was not able to make the situation public for such a long time. But now I know tyrants are cowards, I managed to escape and now I'm more successful in my work than I was before. And I want to help people to find their dignity and come back to a normal human life.

I started my collaboration with IOM before I became a goodwill envoy officially. It happened last summer here in Geneva. And on my way back home, sitting on the plane, an idea occurred to me, an idea of creating a song about human trafficking and my attitude to this issue, a song, which could bring people together. I wrote Russian lyrics and it was translated into English and French. So, I recorded these three versions. And later we made a very moving video, directed by the great English director Justin Kerrigan.

We have released this single worldwide recently and all proceeds will go to the IOM needs.

I'm convinced that working together we can change public perception of this issue in the world, stop violation of human rights and thus can save many human lives.

Thank you.