

**Statement by Mrs. Zsuzanna Jakab
Permanent State Secretary of Health,
Social and Family Affairs
Budapest, Hungary**

**at the Eighty-sixth Session of the IOM Council
18-21 November 2003**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director General, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to address four issues during my short presentation.

First of all, I would like to tell you why human trafficking and public health is an important issue. Secondly, to say a few words about the purpose of the Conference. Thirdly, I would like to tell you what is the impact of this Conference for the management of migration globally. And finally, to tell you a few words about the key issues that came up during the Conference, which are important for our Government, for the Hungarian Government, but in the same way I would imagine also for other countries.

Human Trafficking and the effect on Public Health

First of all, I would like to tell you that in the world globally there are four million trafficked persons, majority women and children – one million children forced into sex trade and child labour – and 500 of these come from our region, and two-thirds are women and many of them, or most of them, I would say, come from some of the NIS countries which are close to my country. There is a high incidence of infectious diseases – HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, sexual-related diseases – and when they arrive, they are in serious mental conditions. And the public has concerns at two levels. At the individual level for the traffic victims and at the public health level for the health of the population of the recipient countries but also for the neighbouring countries, the sub-region and for the region as a whole. So far, not enough attention has been paid to the public health concerns of the human trafficking and therefore there was a very strong feeling both in the IOM secretariat and among the government, that there is a need to have a comprehensive strategy that deals with the inter-relationship of human trafficking and public health and therefore we convene this conference to review the public health aspects of trafficking, the public health risks facing countries and also to ask the conference to develop guidelines to review the training needs for service providers, which is currently lacking and also to develop minimum standards of care and protocols.

So actually, if you go on to the next overhead, you can see that the purpose of the meeting was in line with all these expectations that I told you before and we addressed issues of public health aspects that are leaning to trafficking in human beings, like sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, re-emerging infectious diseases, mental health conditions and we came up with the set of recommendations. I do not want to spend time to explain to you how the conference was run but what was a very important outcome of the conference is that in consensus, we came up with a declaration which we call the Budapest Declaration and I will tell you about a few key recommendations within the declaration in a few minutes.

Before doing so, I would like express my thanks to the Director General of IOM for this initiative to the DDG who came to the meeting, to Dr. Grondin who supported all the public health development and the preparations both before and during the conference but also to the head of the IOM office in Budapest, Mr. Argentina and his collaborator Dr. Szilard, who did a fantastic job.

What is the significance of the conference for the management of migration globally? First of all on the next overhead you can see that the participants of the Budapest conference affirmed

that trafficking was a violation of human rights and they expressed their deep concern that the victims were exposed both to physical and psychological trauma, to sexually transmitted diseases, to other infections, non-infectious diseases and all kind of mental conditions. They also recognized at the same time that countries in the region experienced epidemic levels of HIV/AIDS infection and tuberculosis and here I would like to mention to you that some of the countries, mainly in the NIS countries, there has been 30 fold increase in HIV/AIDS in the last 5 years and this creates a tremendous threat to those neighboring countries where the level of HIV/AIDS infection is still low, for example, in my country or the Baltic States and therefore the participants of the conference expressed the need to address the public health issues of the trafficking in human health in more detail. In the declaration they came up with some very clear and some very specific recommendations and I would like to highlight only a few of these without going into the details.

Budapest Declaration Recommendations for Human Trafficking

First of all, they agreed that the victims of trafficking must be given access to comprehensive health care, which focuses on achieving both physical but also mental and social well being in line with the definition of WHO. Then they also agreed that trained professionals in conformance with professional codes of ethics should provide care. They also agreed that minimum standards should also be established through partnership of government, NGO's and IGO's and here I would like to highlight two issues. One is the training of the professionals and the other one is to develop minimum standards and protocols because on both of these fronts, we have to do a lot of work in order to be satisfied with where we are now.

Then they also agreed that the different stages of intervention fall for different priorities. In the initial rescue phase, the country of destination and/or the transit country should focus on treatment of the injury, trauma, and basic health care including counseling. Whereas later on, in the rehabilitation phase, often in the country of origin, focus should be more on long term health needs and re-integration and care should be tailored to individual needs. They came up with a number of examples and I do not want to go into these details now but I would be happy to talk to you later, should you have any queries. They also agreed that the trafficked children and adolescents have special health needs and they need a long term approach with mental and psycho-social aspects and there are also a number of complex legal issues involved here but whenever you deal with trafficked children and adolescents you always have to look at the best interests of the children.

Then a number of other things were decided upon and I would like to highlight three of these. The rest you can read on this overhead. First of all they felt that shelters and rehabilitation centers played a very important role and therefore their management should also follow professional and standardized approach. Then secondly, they were strongly convinced that training programmes for multi-disciplinary health teams should be developed with focus on sensitizing about the special needs of the victims and thirdly, they felt that the psycho-social counseling plays a critical role in assisting in the long term rehabilitation. Then many other issues that I do not want to go into.

Migration Situation of Hungary

So then, looking at this conference from the point of view of a government, let me say a few words of how it looks for Hungary and I would imagine also from the other Member States or countries. First of all, Hungary is now in a phase of re-integration/integration into the European Union and as you all know, from the first of May next year, Hungary and many other countries including the Baltic states will be a member of the European Union. We are doing greater force to improve the health status of our population. On one hand by transposing the legislation of the European Union, on the other hand with the major public health programme because we want to close the gap in the life expectancy that currently exists between the current EU Member States

and the new Member States of the European Union. So therefore all aspects of migration and all aspects of human trafficking that are playing against this endeavor of the new Member States are really unfavorable in our countries and therefore we will do our utmost to deal with all those public health issues in our health policy. Also to make a case for public health issues in the migration policies that can help to make progress. Therefore, the conference was very important for us because it took place in an area, which was neglected so far, or better, I would not say neglected, but it was not high enough on the political agenda. It also covered the region, which has one-eighth of the trafficked people worldwide; therefore this is a region of high importance from a global point of view. Then it started to raise public awareness of these issues. It provided already a set of recommendations for policy action and it initiated co-operation and partnership. The expected outcome of the conference was to contribute to the reduction of public health risks of human trafficking both at public health and individual level and both in the countries that directly and countries that indirectly affected through migration and human trafficking. But we all know, because we all organize conferences of this type that declarations, action plans, conferences are only useful if there is a follow-up. I feel that this conference was a very important first initiative, but I would like to ask all of us and ask the Director General of the IOM to put this issue high on the agenda of the IOM and there should be a follow-up because all of this initiative and all these recommendations that we have come up with, will only be successful if the full work is well planned.

Hungary will definitely include these recommendations in the public health policy but all countries located centrally in Europe at the crossroad from all directions, we would also be very pleased to play a sub-regional role in this issue, partly on the advocacy front, but partly also, more specifically in the training aspect, because we feel there should be a multi-professional training and as we are located close to the former Yugoslavia countries and also we have borders with the NIS countries and as a new member state of the EU, we could have a very central role to train multi-professional teams at one of our medical universities and set up a kind of training sector there. In the same way, we have very good experts in the IOM office in Hungary also in the country and we could be helpful in developing the minimum standards and protocols in all the areas.

Therefore, finally Mr. Chairman, I simply wanted to make a case for public health aspects of migration and public health aspects of human trafficking. Also vice versa, to advocate for including migration and human trafficking issues in the health policies of the government.

Thank you.