

CCME Press Release of 1st February 2008

Churches encourage European institutions: put human rights at the heart of anti-trafficking policies

Churches welcome entry into force of pan-European Convention against Human Trafficking

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) welcomes today's entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. CCME had together with other Christian organisations and secular partners advocated for ratification of the Convention since it was adopted in May 2005.

In a letter addressed to the European Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security Frattini on this occasion, CCME and seven other international networks active in the fight against trafficking in human beings also urged the European Commission to ratify the Convention on behalf of the European Union.

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) today welcomed the entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings. CCME had together with the Conference of European Churches and Caritas Europe followed the drafting of the Convention. In July 2004 the three organisations provided joint input to the negotiations on the Convention. After the adoption of the Convention in May 2005, CCME had with its Christian partner organisations mobilised churches across Europe; so that they would urge their national governments and parliaments to sign and ratify the Convention. Efforts of the Christian organisations had contributed to the ratification of the Convention by the 10th Council of Europe member state in October 2007, which allowed for the entry into force of the Convention today.

On this occasion, CCME in a coalition with other networks active against trafficking in human beings reiterated its appeal to the European Commission to sign and ratify the Convention. In a letter to the European Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security Franco Frattini, the eight organisations underline that "by addressing the issue of human trafficking in the wider European human rights framework, the EU will ensure greater coherence and legitimacy for its anti-trafficking policy and therefore for its human rights policy as a whole"

Torsten Moritz, who coordinates CCME's networking activities against contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking, explained: "It is encouraging that an essential human rights instrument such as this Council of Europe Convention can finally enter into force. In contrast, the European Union has so far limited itself to the aspect of crime control in its anti-trafficking legislation. A ratification of the Convention by the European Commission would help to put human rights and human dignity at the heart of the EU's anti-trafficking policies "

Note to editors:

The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS N° 197) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 3 May 2005 and opened for signature in Warsaw on 16 May 2005, on the occasion of the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe. The Convention is a comprehensive treaty mainly focussed on the protection of victims of trafficking and the safeguard of their rights. It also aims at preventing trafficking as well as prosecuting traffickers. It has so far been ratified by fourteen states. CCME has since its adoption advocated for the signature and ratification of the convention. (information at: http://www.coe.int/t/DG2/TRAFFICKING/campaign/default_en.asp)

The joint letter to European Commission Vice-President Frattini was signed by CCME and Amnesty International, ECPAT international, ISCOS, La Strada International, PLAN, Save the Children Europe and Terre des Hommes International. It can be found at: <http://www.ccme.be/secretary/NEWS/index.html>. For more information contact CCME at +32 2 2346800 or info@ccme.be

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. Members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches and Councils of Churches as well as church-related agencies across Europe. CCME formally cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.