

**Opening ceremony  
of the Human Trafficking Film Festival**

**Statement by H.E. Andrei Dapkiunas,  
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus,  
on behalf of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking**

**September 27, 2017**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour of delivering this word of greeting on behalf of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking that includes Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Ecuador, Eritrea, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and my own country Belarus.

With today's film festival the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking together with the trusted civil society partners unveils a two-day event on human trafficking with a special focus on minors. This event coincides with the High-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the review of implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. This event in fact enriches the high-level review.

Trafficking in persons is the most appalling manifestation of slavery today. Despite the efforts of the international community to fight this crime, human trafficking remains one of the most serious transboundary threats to human dignity, human rights and development.

It is difficult to imagine the full extent of suffering of the victims of trafficking and the depth of psychological impact this crime has on the souls and lives of survivors of human trafficking.

The artistic fervour and passion of movies – be they feature films or documentaries – better than any formal discussion put us in the irrevocable situation of not being able to say that we did not know.

Let us open our hearts to the painful truth that we may never encounter in our lives but that comes with the in-your-face intensity off the movie screen.

Let us dedicate ourselves to righting the wrongs that put our humanity into question.

Let us rally inner courage and sense of moral responsibility to find the way of uniting our efforts in order to defeat the evil of human trafficking and modern-day slavery once and for all.