

Minister's piece in a similar academic style. It indicates only one thing – that V. Makei has driven his point about human rights discourse absolutely right.

Surely, it was with this logic in mind that the Columbian University in the United States invited V. Makei to deliver a lecture based on his article in September 2013 in New York. The Minister drafted a lengthy text, preparing to give some interesting details in his research that did not find their way in the article. The lecture, regrettably, was not destined to be delivered as the Minister's schedule changed making it impossible for him to be in New York on the arranged day.

Generally, the article served to produce two follow-up developments. First, it reinforced the drive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus to draft reports on violations of human rights in some Western countries. The Ministry began this practice in 2012 as a response to the West's initiative to sponsor a resolution on the situation of human rights in Belarus at the UN Human Rights Council. But, with the clear message from V. Makei that there were no ideal countries on human rights, we, the Ministry's human rights experts were eager to provide sufficient evidence in support of it. Needless to say that V. Makei took a lively interest in all these reports by writing a foreword to each.

Second, it appeared that the Minister's appeal for human rights cooperation has gained some traction in the West, because in 2015 Belarus launched bilateral dialogues on human rights with both the United States of America and the European Union. In the course of the next few years we held a number of such dialogues, which featured frank exchanges and interesting discussions.

We were even discussing with Western counterparts how to wind down the practice of resolutions on the situation of human rights in Belarus at the UN Human Rights Council and arrived at some understanding on how that could be realised. The Minister always provided clear instructions to the delegations of Belarus for these dialogues. His points have consistently been the same: "Belarus always stands ready for dialogue

and cooperation on human rights. But we do not accept any preconditions for dialogue and cooperation. And we have nothing to prove on human rights to the West or justify ourselves"¹³.

To be sure, that nascent human rights cooperation with the West abruptly came to an end in the context of the events surrounding the Presidential election in Belarus, held in August 2020. As it is clear today, the West saw a strategic opportunity through a blitzkrieg-style colour revolution to force both a "regime change" in our country and its geopolitical reorientation towards the West. When it failed in its design, absolutely predictably, the West unleashed a veritable "human rights" storm against Belarus. Indeed, since 2020 the so-called Belarus' case on violations of human rights has been considered at virtually every session of the UN Human Rights Council. Thus, the West once again showed that the issue of human rights was nothing for it but a political instrument.

What comes to mind in this regard is the excellent quotation of American political scientist S. P. Huntington, which V. Makei used in his article: "The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organised violence. Westerners often forget this fact, non-Westerners never do"¹⁴. Unfortunately, this trend continues in today's tumultuous world. The West is bent on remaking the world in its own image using the issue of human rights as a tool to this end.

Human rights should not be an instrument in the West's geopolitical "great game", which may bring about a global catastrophe. Human rights should serve the purpose of guiding action by the world's countries that seek to improve the lives of their people. Heeding the comprehensive and compelling narrative that Minister Makei has presented in his seminal article on human rights a decade ago may surely help in steering the global human rights discourse in the right direction.

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COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Perhaps, no other issue on the international agenda has been so much associated with Belarus than the topic of fighting trafficking in persons. Foreign diplomats often used to ask their Belarusian colleagues about what had motivated Belarus to play such a notable role in that area. We answered that undoubtedly it was our recognition of the problem in the late 1990s and the subsequent successful domestic campaign that virtually

eliminated the crime of human trafficking as an issue of serious concern to the public. Importantly, international organisations praised Belarus' achievements back then.

These factors much inspired us to try to do something useful against human trafficking at the international level. So, in his statement at the United Nations summit in 2005 the President of Belarus A. Lukashenko sent a powerful message to the international community

¹³Makei V. V. Human rights: what and who made them divide the world [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/human-rights-what-and-who-made-them-divide-the-world/> (date of access: 14.06.2023).

¹⁴Ibid.

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to significantly step up its efforts against the crime. That statement, essentially, marked the beginning of Belarus' subsequent vigorous global work against human trafficking.

By the time V. Makei assumed his ministerial function, Belarus had already been in the forefront of global anti-trafficking efforts. Indeed, since 2006 Belarus was sponsoring on a biennial basis a key General Assembly resolution on improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons. Furthermore, Belarus was chairing the Group of friends united against trafficking in persons, an entity consisting of more than 20 countries with branches operating in New York, Geneva and Vienna.

Most important of all, in July 2010 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Global plan of action to combat trafficking in persons (hereinafter Global plan). Belarus first proposed the idea of a Global plan in 2006 and its diplomats worked strenuously in Vienna and New York – the world's two largest anti-trafficking hubs – to garner support to the idea, which had initially been rejected by many states.

The first thing that V. Makei asked his subordinates in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus to do with regard to all foreign policy initiatives of Belarus was to draft for him a kind of overviews of all of them. A “human trafficking” overview certainly caught the Minister's attention. Indeed, he asked advice on additional reading, including on negotiations on the Global plan and on the Global forum on human trafficking – the largest ever international event on that issue – held in Vienna in February 2008.

V. Makei soon let us know that he was working on a large article on human trafficking in English. That article titled “Human trafficking in the post-Cold War period: towards a comprehensive approach”¹⁶ appeared in January 2013 in an US-based “Journal of International Affairs”.

Two things are striking about this article. First, it reads as if it had been written by someone with many years of experience behind him or her in tackling human trafficking. This fact alone tells us how deeply V. Makei has grasped this theme. Second, and what is particularly interesting, the narrative on human trafficking has been framed into a broader picture of global politics. Indeed, while multitude of essays have been written on trafficking in persons by distinguished authors over years, hardly is it possible to find one that strove to connect the two phenomena. To his credit, Minister Makei did it.

The article contains five parts. The first chapter provides an overview of what is generally known about the crime of trafficking in persons in terms of the crime's definition, types of trafficking, breakdowns by gender and age, global trends and regional incidence, etc. Clearly, V. Makei has read much on the issue and relies heavily on various sources in supporting his statistics.

In the second chapter the Minister in a very concise manner tracks all major international efforts that in

some or another way related to the fight against either slavery or trafficking in persons since the early 20th century with a particular focus on the 1990s. His key point is that all earlier initiatives were rather fragmented while during the Cold War there was not much interest in transnational issues like human trafficking, because “the world's major players were primarily preoccupied with traditional security issues”¹⁷.

V. Makei argues that the situation began to change with the end of the Cold War, which inaugurated a more open international environment and more opportunities for migration. But the 1990s were the time, as the Minister put it, for “the problem's recognition”, because policymakers far too often confused the two phenomena – trafficking in persons and migration.

In the third chapter the Minister shows that the recognition of the problem found its reflection in the 2000 Human trafficking protocol that supplements the United Nations Convention against transnational organised crime. The interesting point the Minister makes here is that the Human trafficking protocol is strong on prosecution, but not so much on the aspects of prevention and protection. V. Makei explains that the bias was influenced to some extent by domestic policies in the United States adopted in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The deficiencies of the above mentioned protocol were properly addressed at the Vienna Forum on human trafficking, held in February 2008, as the Minister argues in the fourth chapter. The forum, according to the V. Makei, was an important turning point in the fight against trafficking in persons, because it essentially marked the beginning of a new era that would seek comprehensive rather than “reductionist” approaches against the crime.

The first attempt to realise such a comprehensive approach worldwide was associated with the United Nations Global plan, as the Minister demonstrates in the article's final chapter. He explains its comprehensive nature in structural, normative and organisational terms. The Minister ends his piece on a note that the forthcoming High-level meeting of the UN General Assembly on the appraisal of the Global plan scheduled for May 2013 would provide an opportunity to discuss how the comprehensive approach worked in practice.

Thus, it was only natural that Minister Makei personally attended the above High-level meeting in New York. The Minister delivered a powerful statement, with a particular focus on how the specific elements of the Global plan helped reinvigorate the international response against the hideous crime. More than that, V. Makei outlined a new area for action – trafficking in human organs.

Equipped with the Minister's call, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic Belarus began working on a draft resolution on fighting trafficking in human organs. The resolution was presented to the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal

¹⁶Makei V. V. Human trafficking in the past-Cold War period: towards a comprehensive approach [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/human-trafficking-post-cold-war-period-towards-comprehensive-approach> (date of access: 14.06.2023).

¹⁷Ibid.

Justice (CCPCJ) in May 2014 and adopted by consensus while a number of delegations, including Russia and the United States, cosponsored it. Another resolution on combating organ trafficking was tabled by Belarus at the CCPCJ in 2016. Once again it was adopted by consensus by the Commission. These two resolutions served the purpose of significantly raising attention to the crime of organ trafficking worldwide.

It was not surprising then that “Forced Migration Review”, a journal published in the United Kingdom showed an interest in having an article on the above topic from the Minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Belarus. The Minister wrote a piece titled “Trafficking for human organs”¹⁸, which was published in the journal in May 2015. The purpose that V. Makei sought to achieve in that article was to provide a rationale for a new international legally binding instrument to deal with organ trafficking. On the basis of this rationale Belarusian diplomats subsequently organised many thematic events in Vienna, Geneva and New York. While the goal of drafting a new international treaty on organ trafficking has not been attained yet, the discussion has slowly but steadily been making progress.

It needs to be pointed out that V. Makei took a keen interest in everything that related to Belarus’ “anti-trafficking child”, that is, the UN Global plan. In particular, the Crime Commission launched the biennial Global report on trafficking in persons. So, Minister Makei went to Vienna in November 2014 to attend the launch of the next report. In his remarks to the audience the Minister called the report “Just another effective blow of the hammer at the wall of secrecy that surrounds the crime of human trafficking”.

Since 2011 Belarus has been sponsoring at the UN Crime Commission in Vienna a resolution titled “Implementation of the Global plan of action to combat trafficking in persons”. During V. Makei’s leadership in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus the resolution was adopted by the Commission in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2021. The Minister always took a keen interest in the preparation and was not avert to discussing details with the Ministry’s experts.

Likewise, V. Makei used to attach paramount importance to the quadrennial high-level meetings at the United Nations General Assembly to appraise the Global plan. The Minister attended the meeting in 2013, but was unable to attend one in 2017. Nonetheless, like in 2013 when the Minister voiced the idea of addressing trafficking in organs, his contribution to the 2017 appraisal was also great. In particular, at the Minister’s

suggestion Belarusian diplomats worked to include in a Political declaration of the meeting a topic of the role of ICTs in combating trafficking in persons. Our idea was endorsed by others and reflected in that declaration.

Building on this, Belarus sponsored at the CCPCJ in May 2018 a resolution on the above topic, which was unanimously adopted with many co-sponsors from all regions of the world. It was the first-ever resolution on this issue and its adoption virtually sparked a lot of various relevant studies and events around the world. On many occasions Belarusian diplomats stood at such events as keynote speakers.

So, when it comes to the topic of combating trafficking in persons, the following three conclusions can be safely made in answering the question of what legacy V. Makei left to us and to the world.

First, through his personal interest, initiatives, involvement, encouragement and attention, Minister Makei worked tirelessly to strengthen and firmly embed Belarus’ anti-trafficking leadership on the international scene, which he inherited from his predecessor. As a result, the past decade will always be remembered as a period during which Belarus demonstrated vigorous global engagement in the fight against human trafficking.

Second, V. Makei triggered a world-wide interest in the topic of trafficking in human organs, which is closely related to trafficking in humans. If the world ever develops in the future a separate international legally binding tool on organ trafficking, much credit for it should undoubtedly go to V. Makei, who first broached the issue, elaborated the rationale for it, and did much to advance the idea around the world.

Finally, in his drive to ensure a comprehensive approach to fighting trafficking in persons, V. Makei has in fact inaugurated the need to cover “all angles” of the problem, in other words, to tackle all “dimensions”. Indeed, in addition to sponsoring a biennial omnibus resolution on human trafficking at the UN General Assembly, Belarus began proposing in the past decade resolutions in the Vienna-based Crime Commission on specific aspects of the crime, like trafficking in human organs, human trafficking and ICTs.

This line suggested by V. Makei will surely be followed by Belarusian diplomats in the years to come with such topics for new resolutions, among others, as human trafficking in supply chains, human trafficking of children, trafficking in persons in armed conflict, vulnerability to trafficking in persons.

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¹⁸Makei V. V. Trafficking for human organs [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.fmreview.org/climatechange-disasters/makei> (date of access: 14.06.2023).

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