



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Ozark Henry appointed UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for Belgium against human trafficking

Brussels, 21 October 2015 - The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has appointed **Piet Goddaer (aka Ozark Henry)** as its new **National Goodwill Ambassador against human trafficking**. The appointment of Mr. Goddaer – a well-known Belgian performing artist – is aimed at increasing visibility and assisting in mobilizing support in the country to tackle human trafficking.

Speaking on his appointment, Mr. Goddaer explained one of the reasons as to why he has decided to work with UNODC, specifically on its anti-human trafficking work: *“Many victims of human trafficking are out there. We just don't see them or want to see them. From the kids being forced to beg on the streets to those being forced or coerced to be sex workers or work illegally in sweatshops. We live happily in our own little worlds, going on with our own daily business. I felt it was time to act and to try and do something about this and make a difference in raising awareness and supporting organisations working to combat this modern day form of slavery.”*

On the back of Mr. Goddaer's strong interest in working to raise awareness around this important issue, **Jean-Luc Lemahieu, UNODC Director of Public Affairs**, welcomed him as the Office's first National Goodwill Ambassador for Belgium. *“Mr. Goddaer is a prominent Belgian artist who has demonstrated a strong commitment to help raise awareness about the crime of human trafficking. Ozark Henry through his rhythmic voice and melodic music is one of Belgium's most influential modern day story tellers who will help UNODC spread the word about this horrific crime that afflicts so many vulnerable victims.”*

Speaking for Europe's civil society, **Georges Dassis, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**, declared: *“10,000 victims of human trafficking reported every year in Europe: this modern day form of slavery is a scandal and a crime against civilised society. Ozark Henry's appointment as UN Goodwill Ambassador is a good news for Belgium and for Europe, as it will raise awareness and prompt many to action. I pledge that civil society organisations will stand by to support him, as they are the best placed to help identify victims and work actively on prevention. You can count on us to be a key partner in the fight against human trafficking.”*

On behalf of Belgium, **Deputy Director General for Multilateral Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Werner Bauwens**, praised the concrete work undertaken by UNODC in order to counter human trafficking. Belgium actively contributes to the international efforts and plays a leadership role through its groundbreaking integrated approach, ensuring permanent liaison between all relevant government agencies. Werner Bauwens welcomed the personal commitment of Mr. Goddaer and stressed the importance of his action as Goodwill Ambassador for Belgium. Awareness raising and concrete measures to tackle effectively human trafficking go hand in hand. The Belgian profile in the United Nations will be reinforced by this public campaign, which illustrates once more the deep attachment of Belgium to the protection of all those who are most vulnerable in our societies, locally and globally.

Using his popularity and networks, Mr. Goddaer is set to work with UNODC to raise awareness and reach out to significant audiences both nationwide and abroad. His upcoming performance at the Morgan Library in New York (November 5) and concert with the National Orchestra of Belgium at the Lotto Arena (November 27) will be dedicated to the Blue Heart Campaign.

“Human trafficking is a hidden crime,” Mr. Goddaer also notes. “But still, if we look well, we’ve all witnessed it. But we didn’t stand up for the victims and so the perpetrator didn’t get penalized. Human trafficking is one of the most lucrative crimes these days, and in many ways can be seen as a form of modern-day slavery. We’re all appalled when we learn about these things through history books, we should be more appalled it’s still happening today.”

Human trafficking revolves around the exploitation of society’s most vulnerable and can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. In Belgium, the main reported form is trafficking for the purpose of forced labour, but sexual exploitation is frequently reported too.

According to the UNODC’s latest [Global Report on Trafficking in Persons](#), on a wider level, Western Europe is considered a destination location for victims trafficked from other regions, such as Africa, Asia and the Americas and for European victims trafficked from Central Europe and the Western Balkans. Meanwhile, the 2015 EUROSTAT publication on human trafficking notes that more than 30,000 registered victims were reported in the European Union between 2010 and 2012, with Belgium reporting a gradual increase during this period. As with other forms of organized crime, determining reliable data is difficult and the number of undetected cases might be much higher.

Mr. Goddaer’s new role as National Goodwill Ambassador compliments and builds on his other past philanthropic projects and awareness campaigns such as with Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF), and his 2013 work for a national awareness campaign against young people dying in traffic accidents through the song ‘21 grams short’ which was produced.

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