

OSCE conference:

“Ethical issues in Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking”

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Good afternoon delegates and excellencies. Thank you to the OSCE for inviting me. It is an honor to be here and I look forward to discussing this topic with all of you and learning from my fellow panelists.

My name is Samir Goswami and I am the Director of Government Professional Solutions at LexisNexis. We are a large information company doing business in over 100 countries. Journalists, lawmakers, lawyers, researchers use our research platforms and over 35,000 sources of information we have to do their work.

Our company has also been a champion of the rule of law—and support efforts to help promote good governance. We’ve recently partnered with the UN Secretary General’s office to work with businesses to establish rule of law principles that corporations can abide by while investing in emerging markets and areas where rule of law is weak.

We are also a founding member of the Global Business Coalition Against Trafficking, a (gBCAT) network of Fortune 500 companies collaborating on how business can help eliminate modern day slavery.

I am based in Washington DC. My team does two things, we sell data to the US federal government, and we also use our data expertise to enter into partnerships to advance the rule of law. We are constantly finding ways to use our information management expertise to find ways to disseminate information to those who need it—for example many people around the world don’t have access to basic legal information, that is they don’t know what their rights are. They could be victims of violence, if there land was

unjustly taken away, could be arrested arbitrarily, or a survivor of human trafficking, and even though they are in an area that has local laws that protect them from these issues—they don't know that they have protections and possibly access to remedy. My team is partnering with others to disseminate this information to them so they can better advocate for themselves. We're also in the preliminary stages of seeing how we can use this data expertise to ingest and disseminate information about labor exploitation risks in supply chains.

Previous to this role at Lexis I was the Managing Director of the Individuals and Communities at Risk Program at Amnesty International USA—where my team managed all the information about human rights risks that the global Amnesty was collecting from all over the world—my role was to create a more efficient data management system so we could respond quicker to emerging crisis and use all the data we had to perhaps predict risks.

Previously to this role I was the Director of Corporate Social Responsibility at LexisNexis where part of my duties was to help staff the global Business Coalition Against Trafficking.

I have spent many years working directly with survivors of human trafficking, homelessness, gender based violence and labor exploitation—with one overarching theme—providing a space for those who endure these issues, survive these issues to know their rights and have a say in the development of the solutions and policies that impact them—so they feel like fully engaged citizens and the state responds to their needs. And I believe there is an opportunity now, with developments in technology and data science for workers themselves to provide insights into their working conditions in that businesses can access and act upon as they monitor and evaluate their supply chains.

I want to begin with a story. When I was younger my father was a Diplomat for the Indian Embassy and in the mid-80s we were stationed in Tripoli, Libya. My dad was the

consular Attaché so he handled immigration into India and also repatriation. Most the times that I'd visit him at the Embassy there would be hundreds of men hanging around the Embassy, sleeping on the lawns and on the sofas in the waiting room, some in tattered clothing. My dad told me that these men were from villages in India and were promised good jobs by recruiters in the Libyan oil fields—but when they got here, things were quite different than they were promised and faced other abuses often without a grievance mechanism. They often worked in brutal conditions for a different wage than they were promised. The men I saw were the ones who were able to get away, find their way to their Embassy and await repatriation.

That was in the mid 80s, 15 years before the Palermo protocol, before international understanding and conventions of deceptive labor practices, some of which we would call human trafficking. This was before we had ILO, OSCE and UN guidelines as well as local and international conventions that guide states and businesses.

Fast forward about 30 years to 2013 when I was working at Amnesty International USA and Amnesty issued a report on the construction industry in Qatar—it was the same story. Men from Bangladesh, Nepal and India were being recruited under false pretenses, charged a fee and often under brutal conditions in the construction industry in Qatar as that country gets ready for the 2022 football world cup.

I want to be clear—TREMENDOUS progress has been made, TREMENDOUS progress. We have much more awareness, effective policy frameworks and I must admit a modicum of political will—but as the authors of the OSCE report indicated earlier—a lot of work still needs to be done.

And to that, I want to very briefly summarize a couple of key things to help advance the issues of how businesses can uncover and respond to labor exploitation in their supply chain:

- 1) The necessity of consumer demand for slave free products
- 2) Govt accountability and rule of law

- 3) Providing procurement decision makers with the information they need to make the right buying decisions

I will spend most of my time on these last two points.

1. First, much has been said about consumer demand, or the lack thereof for slave free goods. There is some research that shows that consumers care more and that “price being equal” and that is the key factor here—price, consumers would prefer sustainable products, I’ll leave that discussion for those who have done the research. Anecdotally, when I was helping staff the gBCAT in its early stages in 2011 and then early 2012, I engaged with executives from various leading global brands who were clearly interested in how they and their companies could help combat trafficking—not a one, not one executive said they were there because their consumers wanted them to be. Which was remarkable to me—not a one was either being hearing from consumers that they should be responsible, nor were they being thanked by consumers for the positive steps some were taking.

Participation in gBCAT for these executives was often personal—they saw a documentary, or they happened to come into contact with a survivor, or a child learned about it—I wholeheartedly think that businesses should and can do more—but consumers pay a key role in demanding better practices from the businesses they buy goods from.

2. The second point I want to highlight is governance and the rule of law. Businesses need partners in government to ensure that workers are protected under the law of the land. Businesses can and should influence these governments to promote the rule of law. For example when Georgetown University was setting up a campus in Qatar, they negotiated a strong contract and provisions to ensure protections for workers who built the campus.

A couple of years ago I was in Bawana, a large slum outside of Delhi. In 2010 Delhi hosted the commonwealth games and like many modern cities they ended up pushing poor people outside of the city to clear way for the games.

Bawana is a sprawling slum—surrounded by factories. I visited with NGOs there and met with community leaders. What I observed was that the children in the slums would wake up in the morning, walk right past the public school and to the factories to produce rubber and electronic goods. These factories are not hidden—they're pretty non-descript buildings surrounding the slums. When I asked the community members where the police were, they pointed to them on the streets and said that some of the mothers of these children are actually often provided to the police officers for sex while the kids work. Keep in mind that India has some strong anti-child labor laws and rights for children to go to school—but there are some clear governance and corruption issues that need to be addressed—the Indian government has a role to play here as do the Indian businesses that are sourcing their material from these factories—keep in mind, as an outsider I was able to uncover this in a matter of minutes—it wasn't hidden.

This is why LexisNexis has partnered with the UN Secretary General's office on a project to work with businesses to develop rule of law principles to ensure that investments are made that promote good governance.

3. Finally, I want to briefly discuss procurement decision making by companies and what the global business coalition against trafficking is doing, and some of the inroads in data science and information management that is and can provide insight to businesses about their supply chains.

Through gBCAT, businesses are learning from one another about best practices in adopting anti human trafficking policy and supply chain insights.

gBCAT is helping with this. One focus is a benchmarking exercise of company anti-trafficking policies based on a newly developed methodology that allows comparison of more than 50 variables. Companies are assessed upon joining gBCAT and the findings are incorporated into a report that includes a summary of each company's policies and

a scorecard that allows members to assess their policies in comparison with those of other member and non-member companies.

gBCAT is also creating a compilation of best practices to address human trafficking impacts in supply chains. The catalog identifies areas of risks, provides best practices to address those risks and exemplifies the successful application of best practices with case studies. The repertoire will be uploaded on gBCAT's website and made available to the general public. The purpose is to allow other companies to take steps to join the fight against human trafficking, and to highlight the anti-trafficking efforts of members. Again, gBCAT is focusing on businesses helping businesses, learning a lot from civil society and practitioners, including Mark Lagon the former ambassador at large for human trafficking for the US state department who sits on the gBCAT board.

Now, the average Fortune 1000 business has over 10K suppliers—in complex supply chains that span the globe. Furthermore, supply chains vary—our supply chain as an information and technology company is vastly different, with different complexities than an oil or mining company. Information is scarce and sources often untrustworthy—I say this not as an excuse, but as an operational obstacle that we do need to overcome—and we can overcome it.

I want to be clear—it is difficult but not impossible, and now more than ever we can rely on technology solutions to help.

Contrary to some myth, there is no nefarious plot by some evil corporate executive to enslave people. Most genuinely and rightfully see their supply chains as economic opportunity. Most procurement decisions are not made at that executive level—it is a procurement manager or director who is in charge of a million dollar supply chain for certain commodities or goods who has to balance the procurement requirements with a whole host of compliance issues—where the good is made, corruption, political exposure, environmental issues, any issues that can be forecasted that may cause a disruption in production. Generally, these decision makers rely upon dashboards, including one that we have called Smartwatch for this insight.

Generally speaking, there really is no such procurement tool—that these decision makers use that can provide human rights risks as an indicator—but integrating data into these tools could make an operational difference. Surveys (Chainlink) have shown that companies spend considerable funds on supply chain diligence, but most are worried that they do not know enough about sustainability issues.

My team is in the initial stages of contacting various civil society organizations who collect excellent data about working conditions in an area and seeing if we can normalize it, aggregate it and map it to a supply chain and provide it to a procurement decision makers—our aim is simple—let’s create a system, using technology, to help the workers inform a company about their conditions. And if companies the chance to act upon that information.

I want to end with a note of caution. I am a data geek—a big part of my job is to manage data and enable our customers to do wonderful things and gain wonderful insights into all sorts of things through data—and we are at a point in time where information has never been more accessible and systems simpler to help us uncover, understand and solve problems. And my team is focused on that to provide access to information about their rights to workers and insights to businesses about their supply chains—but none of that replaces the political will required by CONSUMERS, BUSINESSES AND GOVERNMENTS.