



**THE HOLY SEE**  
**2014 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
*Working Session 6: Humanitarian issues and other commitments:*  
*Combating Trafficking in Human Beings*  
**Thursday, September 25, 2014**

Ms. Moderator,

Trafficking in persons constitutes a shameful crime against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights. Despite the efforts of many, trafficking in human beings is a global plague. Victims are hidden away in private homes, in illegal establishments, in factories, on farms, behind closed doors, in families, houses and other places in the cities, villages and slums of the world's richest and poorest nations. This situation seems not to be improving but, on the contrary, is probably deteriorating.

It should be said aloud and clearly that each human being is a free person, whether man, woman, girl or boy, and is called to live in equality and fraternity. Any relationship that fails to respect the fundamental equality of all people, men or women, boys or girls, in their freedom and dignity constitutes a grave crime against humanity.

Trafficking in human beings must be declared a crime against humanity and traffickers should be prosecuted on the basis of clear international and national laws, including the confiscation of the profits derived from their illegal activities, and the victims ought to be fully compensated from such funds.

It is our common obligation to eradicate this grave violation of human rights and strive to ensure that all human beings co-exist in freedom, equality, harmony and peace, in accordance with the values common to our shared humanity. With the support of academics, moral and religious leaders, together with the influence of a global movement and social networks, we must expose these hidden crimes by using today's technology and working through good and just national and international institutions.

Addressing human trafficking remains an elusive goal if the courage to address the ever more growing reality of consumerism nurturing the exploitation of vulnerable human beings is lacking. In this regard, it is necessary to recognize that it is extreme poverty which often drives those longing for a better future into the hands of those preying upon the vulnerability of the poor and the defenseless. These individuals, prompted by a genuine desire to provide for themselves and their needy families, too easily become unsuspecting victims of those who make false promises of a better future in another country or community. Our efforts to address human trafficking are inherently linked, therefore, to our determination to address poverty eradication and lack of equal economic opportunity.

The Catholic Church, through her institutions and agencies around the world, is providing assistance, care and support to thousands of survivors of human trafficking. Let

me mention only few like International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons, TALITHA KUM, present in 82 countries throughout the world, RENATE (Religious Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation) present in 18 European countries, COATNET, an ecumenical network of organizations working with Christian Churches (Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox) which share a joint commitment to working together internationally and Caritas Internationalis, a confederation of 164 Catholic relief, development and social service organizations, which operates in over 200 countries, and territories worldwide. These institutions and their courageous individuals sacrifice themselves on a daily basis to help those who have become victims to this modern plague of human trafficking. Many of these individuals have paid dearly in their endeavours to provide assistance to victims or expose the victimizers. A new anti-trafficking foundation recently was also launched by Pope Francis along with Anglican and Muslim leaders called the “Global Freedom Network”, which aim to further foster the engagement of religious communities in combating the scourge of the modern day slavery. In fact, one of the topics to which Pope Francis dedicated a lot of attention, as you may already know, is precisely the trafficking in human beings. In his Address last December to the 17 new Ambassadors accredited to the Holy See which was concerned with the problem of trafficking in human beings, Pope Francis said:

“Together we can and must employ our energies so that these women, men and children can be freed, thus putting an end to this horrible trade. It is believed that there are millions of victims of forced labour, victims of human trafficking for the purposes of manual work and of sexual exploitation. This cannot continue. It constitutes a grave violation of the human rights of those victimized and is an offense against their dignity, as well as a defeat for the worldwide community. People of good will, whether or not they profess religious beliefs, must not allow these women, men and children to be treated as objects, to be deceived, raped, often sold and resold for various purposes, and in the end either killed or left devastated in mind and body, only to be finally thrown away or abandoned. It is shameful.

Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. We must unite our efforts to free the victims and stop this increasingly aggressive crime which threatens not only individuals but the basic values of society and of international security and justice, to say nothing of the economy, and the fabric of the family and our coexistence.” (*Address of Pope Francis to the new Ambassadors accredited to the Holy See on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters of credence, Vatican, Thursday, 12 December 2013*)

Thank you, Ms. Moderator!