

Statement by His Excellency, Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher
Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See

*Presentation of the “Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking”
to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*

Aula Vecchia del Sinodo

27 September 2019

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join you today for the presentation of the “Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking” by the Section for Migrants and Refugees of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development. As many of you already know, the Section for Migrants and Refugees is directed personally by Pope Francis and was created by him to provide concrete support to the local Church in its efforts to care for migrants, refugees and the victims of human trafficking and modern slavery.

As part of that concrete, action-oriented support, the Section has produced the handbook of pastoral orientations that we have before us today.

The handbook provides a comprehensive overview of the crisis of human trafficking internationally. While it was prepared specifically for the local Church, anyone can read the handbook, including public officials, to gain a greater understanding of the scope of the crisis and what it will take to deliver a practical, holistic, and truly effective response.

Even more importantly, the handbook focuses on people, highlighting not only the plight of the “millions of men, women and children who are trafficked and enslaved”, but also the deleterious effect that the sin of human trafficking has on the humanity and dignity of those who seek to benefit from this heinous act, a reality that often goes unconsidered.

THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

To date, there are 175 State parties to the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons*, better known as the *Palermo Protocol*. This instrument provides the foundation for the international community’s response to human trafficking. The protocol defines trafficking in persons as, “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction,

of fraud, of deception...to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”¹

While this definition provides the parameters within which the crime of human trafficking can be prosecuted, it is applicable only to offences that are transnational in nature and that involve international, organized criminal groups. Still, as the handbook points out, “the definition provides a useful minimum or starting-point for further reflection and actions against this scourge.”

Building on this normative definition, the international community has made substantial progress in addressing human trafficking and modern forms of slavery at the national, regional and international level. Recently, this includes the commitments made in targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as in Objective 10 of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM).

However, despite the progress made, the sad reality is that the victims of forced labour, prostitution, organ trafficking, and new forms of reproductive exploitation, including surrogacy, are increasing at an alarming rate. In fact, if we are to close the gap between the commitments made and the practical steps taken to eradicate what Pope Francis has often called an “abhorrent plague”, we must constantly reassess and renew our collective efforts to end this perniciously profitable practice.

PREVENT, PROTECT, PROSECUTE AND PARTNERSHIPS

Recently reappraised in 2018, the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons can provide us with a helpful framework to assess where and how the international community can improve its overall response. The Global Plan of Action (GPA) consists of four areas of focus, known collectively as **the four P’s**, “*prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships*”.

1) **Prevention**

The primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is the human person in his or her integrity.² With this in mind, to prevent human trafficking, the international community must work to address the entire chain of exploitation that makes trafficking profitable.

First, this means understanding and responding to its drivers and root causes, in other words, the *supply side* of human trafficking. This includes poverty and weak public institutions; it includes limited access to health care, quality education and job opportunities. It also includes armed conflict, violence, natural disasters and other factors that lead to forced displacement. As the handbook rightfully points out, “[t]he most radical form of prevention is...upholding the *right to remain* in one’s country and place of origin and ensuring that people have access to basic goods” and the possibility for their “integral human development.” At the same time, when people have no choice but to flee,

¹ Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

² Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 29 June 2009, 25.

increasing access to legal pathways for migration, including through temporary and humanitarian visas will help prevent them from turning to smugglers and human traffickers in times of desperation.

Second, we must address consumption, or the global *demand* that exists for exploitation in our own societies. While much attention is paid to the traffickers who provide the *supply*, little is said about the consumers: the factor of demand, which traffickers continue to meet and which makes trafficking profitable.³ Here the words of Pope Francis are particularly prescient, “if there are so many...victims of trafficking...it is because many demand these services. I wonder then, is the principal cause of trafficking really traffickers?” For this reason, Pope Francis insists that, while arresting the perpetrators of these crimes is an obligation of justice, “the true solution is the conversion of hearts, cutting off demand in order to dry the market.”⁴ This requires the conscious education of every person, especially our youth, to our God given dignity and that of our neighbour.

2) **Protection**

Protection means meeting the specific needs of trafficking victims and helping ensure that they do not fall back into the throes of exploitation. Targeted training of local law enforcement, as well as public health officials, is the first step in this effort. The ability to properly identify the signs of trafficking and to provide the correct response, including the provision of adequate health care services and psychosocial support, facilitates recovery and reintegration back into society.

In addition, victims require a safe and secure environment where they are free to discuss their experiences of exploitation and seek out justice. Therefore, victims of trafficking and modern forms of slavery should not fear reprisal or arrest. Instead, they should be provided with the support they need to recover their lives and livelihoods, including access to legal services and safe houses. If a victim *must* be returned to their home country, their return should be voluntary, and must *always* respect the principle of non-refoulement.

One example of a group working tirelessly in the rehabilitation of the victims and survivors of human trafficking is Talitha Kum a network seeking to address the whole person, including their spiritual needs, helping them to break the bonds of slavery and to restore their dignity. Using a victim-centred approach, the network identifies people in need and supports them with shelter, social reintegration and education.

3) **Prosecution**

Recently, enhanced country-level anti-trafficking measures have led to a rise in both the number of detected victims, as well as trafficking convictions. In fact, recent analysis by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) shows that the total number of convictions have steadily increased since 2007, the first year a critical mass of countries consistently reported such data. Even though the trend is increasing, the absolute number

³ Pastoral Orientations on Trafficking

⁴ Pope Francis, Address to the Participants in the World Day of Prayer, *Reflection and Action against Human Trafficking*, 12 February 2018.

of detections and convictions in some countries remains very low and there appears to be hardly any risk for traffickers to face justice. As a result, the question remains as to whether the number of convictions reflects low levels of trafficking activity in some regions or a limited ability to detect the crime.⁵

To address this situation and to improve the global response, quality data is needed. Many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and some parts of East Asia, for example, lack sufficient capacity to record and share data on trafficking in persons. In this respect, investment by the international community to improve the regional and national response to local trafficking networks is essential.

4) **Partnerships**

Unfortunately, today, every country is a country of origin, transit and destination for human trafficking. In fact, in front of this transnational crisis, international cooperation and partnerships are invaluable. Partnerships encourage collaboration and promote the use of best practices across every sector, including among governments, government agencies, academic institutions and the media, civil society and the private sector.

One such example is the Santa Marta Group, and international alliance of police chiefs and bishops from around the world working together with civil society in a process endorsed by Pope Francis, to eradicate human trafficking and modern day slavery. The Group now has members in over 35 countries. Similarly, the broad academic discussion promoted by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (PASS), especially around the ethics of human trafficking, also provides a helpful model for collaboration.

CONCLUSION

Four years ago this week, Pope Francis visited the United Nations on the opening day of the 70th General Assembly. On that day, one of his key messages was that “the magnitude of these situations and their toll on innocent lives [is so great], that we must avoid every temptation to fall into a declarationist nominalism which would assuage our consciences.”

The Holy See reiterates that message here with you today, at the presentation of the Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking, which the Holy Father hopes will serve as a practical guide in your efforts to end the scourge of human trafficking.

⁵ Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)