

**THE VIENNA FORUM TO FIGHT HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
13-15 February 2008**

**Vienna, Austria**

**AIDE MEMOIRE**

**WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

**BACKGROUND**

The Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking to be held at the United Nations Headquarters in Vienna from 13 to 15 February 2008 will focus on the three overriding themes of vulnerability, impact and action. It will offer plenary sessions and a series of panels and workshops on different aspects of the three themes.

This event is part of the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT). The Global Initiative aims to mobilize state and non-state actors to eradicate human trafficking by i) reducing the vulnerability of potential victims and the demand for exploitation in all its forms; ii) ensuring adequate protection and support to those who do fall victim, and iii) supporting the efficient prosecution of the criminals involved, while respecting the fundamental human rights of all persons.

UN.GIFT is part of a wide partnership by the UN-System and other international and regional organizations (ILO, IOM, OSCE, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNODC). These organizations, which form part of UN.GIFT Steering Committee, are responsible for the organization of the panels and workshops of The Vienna Forum.

**CONTEXT**

The overwhelming majority of persons trafficked are women and children. According to recent estimates, 2 to 4 million people are trafficked annually. Data suggests that women and children are primary victims of this crime, which has a negative effect on efforts to alleviate poverty.

Historically, women leaders have been key operators in putting social development and issues earlier referred to as being "private", such as domestic violence, on the political agenda. With women's issues now gaining more public attention in the international community, various opportunities have opened up for women efforts at advocating policies concerning women.

Recognizing women leaders as an instrumental tool to assist Governments and Civil Society in preparing strategic opportunities to advocate for the fight against human trafficking and closing gender gaps, an integral component of UN.GIFT is the establishment of a Women's Leadership Council.

UN.GIFT aims to emphasize the essential role women must play in combating human trafficking, by bringing together women with significant experience and leadership in their respective fields, who are well positioned within their individual and professional capacities to affect positive change on the issue in their nations and/or region.

The Council will be committed to the personal and professional development of women, providing opportunities and access to critical resources, strengthening the network of supportive and positive role models, and encouraging open discussion about the complex issues surrounding human trafficking.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The overall objective is to positively influence the work of UN.GIFT by providing a high-level of professional outreach, with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the areas of Women's issues and human rights. Specifically, the Women's Leadership Council aims to:

- *demonstrate women's leadership roles* in countering global human trafficking; focusing on the overall goal of countering human trafficking in all forms of exploitation.
- *establish connections across sectors* and regions to mobilize sustainable resources, knowledge and experience to fight human trafficking.
- *serve as a catalyst* to strengthen the capacity and contribution of women's leadership towards preventing suppressing and punishing trafficking in persons, especially of women and children.

## **EXPECTED OUTPUTS**

The Women's Leadership Council will assist in informing UN.GIFT on emerging global and national challenges particularly in reference to the strategic and interrelated areas on human trafficking to which women and children are most vulnerable.

At the Vienna Forum the women leaders will announce collectively an initiative / statement of their commitments and action plans to support UN.GIFT in the fight against human trafficking. These initiatives will range from public awareness raising events, innovative government policies, fund-raising support, business strategies, and other cross-sectoral collaborative efforts.

A meeting of Women Leaders will allow sensitisation and awareness raising of the initiative, which will be instrumental in securing global commitment in the fight against human trafficking.

## **STRUCTURE AND CONTENT**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2007, UN.GIFT will convene an anti-trafficking strategy meeting for high profile women leaders to discuss their individual roles in the global fight against human trafficking.

A roundtable plenary discussion followed by a question-and-answer panel session will provide the setting for women leaders from around the world to share ideas and information, strategize on models and initiatives for cross-sector and cross region cooperation to counter human trafficking with a specific focus on women and children.

The council members will consider, potential initiatives and/or activities geared towards empowering women. They will draw together their views on the appropriate mix of strategies and activities for the implementation phase of the project. These would be aimed at strengthening the effectiveness and potential impact of UN.GIFT.

A concise statement of key messages will be elaborated and a summary of the council discussions will be incorporated into the outcome document of the Vienna Forum.

UN.GIFT will continue working with the women leaders after the Vienna Forum providing technical support to ensure their participation and engagement through subsequent initiatives. The Council will work to promote cross-sectoral and cross regional dialogue and partnership.

## **THEMES**

“Strategies to Promote Women's Leadership in the Fight Against Human Trafficking”

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The Women Leaders' Council will include a geographically balanced group of widely respected leaders from Governments, International Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Academia, Media, Cultural life and the Private Sector, who can effectively serve as advocates for UN.GIFT.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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