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Homepage

## Global Forum on 'Hidden Crime of Globalization'

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The first global forum to fight human trafficking has started its sessions on Wednesday February 12 in Vienna, Austria. Over 1200 experts from different fields, NGO representatives and business leaders have come together to discuss the world's one of the most important problem: human trafficking.

Just before the forum to start, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drug and Crime, Antonio Maria Costa, described the problem with such a sentence:

“The blood, sweat and tears of trafficking victims are on the hands of consumer all over the world. This is a crime that shames us”<sup>[1]</sup> He was describing the problem within the context of global economic system and calls it as 'hidden crime of globalization'.

Even though to reach a fully reliable data on the issue is impossible due to the complexity and illegality of the problem itself, the UN reports estimate that about one million people are being trafficked annually across the borders.

Within this highly awful environment, the importance of the global forum in Vienna is out of question. However, there needs to be a closer look at the issue from a critical perspective to locate the possible outcomes of the forum in its wider framework.

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## **Human Trafficking as the 'Modern-Day Slavery'**

Human trafficking has become a realtransnational organized enterprise especially within the last couple of decades. The issue exists in a so serious level that it is called as“modern-day slavery” by many experts as well as international organizations. In broad terms, the notion refers to the movement of people through violence, deception or coercion, for the purpose of forcedlabor, servitude and slavery-like practices.

Generally speaking, the human trafficking demonstrates a very complex picture that needs a comprehensive approach to comprehend the root-causes of the issue. In that regard, the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking makes a categorization of 'supply and demand factors' or 'push and pull factors' in order to understand the reasons behind the recent rise of the problem[2]

Considering push factors, the most important problems as follows:

- Poverty,
- Illiteracy and lack of employment opportunities,
- Regional imbalances in socio-economic development,
- The societal/domestic factors that establish discriminatory practices against women,
- The relaxation in border control mechanisms due to the increased complexity of the relations in the globalization age,
- The increased need for cheap labor in the recent years,
- Civil war, ethnic conflicts ..etc.

The above mentioned points are the commonly referred push factors that lie at the heart of the human trafficking even though the list can be multiplied.

Generally speaking, the prospects of a better life abroad, the widespread poverty, domestic socio-economic marginalization, socio-political unrest and internal conflicts seem to be the main intensives behind the human trafficking.

On the other hand, this fragile picture is complemented with the pull factors that mostly exist in the regions and/or countries having relatively high level of socio-economic development. In the sense, the experts on the issue refer the below stated points to explain the demand factors for the trafficking in persons:

- A consistently expanding commercial sex industry which is sometimes linked as 'beneficial' to the promotion of tourism. This particular factor is even more worsened with the reluctance of the states to consider it as

a serious problem to tackle with.

- The demand for cheap labor in the advanced industrial centers having highly competitive place in the global market,
- The enduring codes of patriarchal society which simply promotes the 'commodification of women',

Mainly as a result of such factors, the problem has turned to be not only a major international crime but also a main cause of violations of human rights. In that sense, the picturing of regional and global dynamics of the issue is of crucial importance.

### Regional and Global Statistics: Globalization of Slavery?

The issue of trafficking in persons has evolved into a major global problem in contemporary world. As reported by the UNODC officials, about 2,5 million people from 127 countries have been trafficked to 137 countries and 1.2 million persons are trafficked annually although it is quite difficult to collect data and arrive at an exact number on human trafficking. UNFPA reports that between 600,000-800,000 women, men and children are trafficked across international borders each year. Of these, the majority is girls and women, and over 50% are children. Regarding all these statistical data, the below table from ILO gives more comprehensive picture about the problem [3]

	Trafficked people	% of regional total	Profits generated by trafficked forced labourers (\$million)
Asia and Pacific	1,360,000	14%	9,704
Industrialised countries	270,000	75%	15,513
Latin America & Caribbean	250,000	19%	1,348
Mid-East and North Africa	230,000	88%	1,508
Transition countries	200,000	95%	3,422
Sub-Saharan Africa	130,000	20%	159
Total	2,440,000	20%	31,654

\*counted in region of destination

SOURCE: ILO

In terms of the regional dimension of the issue, there exists a clear categorization among different parts of the world. While the underdeveloped countries are the

constant originating places for the human trafficking, the developed countries appear as the destination points to reach. However, it is crucial to remind that there might exist intra-regional trafficking making more developed countries the destination stations. Therefore, it seems quite clear that the human trafficking that has become a major transnational organized crime is conducted along the lines of the socio-economic development imbalances. In other words, the regional and global socio-economic inequality lies at the heart of this modern-day slavery. Furthermore, with the overwhelming proliferation of the effects of globalization, the problem of human trafficking itself has become 'globalized'. It is simply *the globalization of the slavery* in the contemporary world.

In that sense, the below analysis on regional level provides a comprehensive picture about the problem worldwide.

#### *Africa:*

In Africa, there are some networks operating solely within the continent, transporting victims from one part of the continent to another and most reported African victims are from Nigeria. The International Labour Organization indicates the strong evidence that children play a higher proportion of forced labourers in Africa than any other parts of the world.

Large numbers of children from Bénin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Togo, are trafficked to Bénin, the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Nigeria. Children in West and Central Africa are trafficked into several types of economic activity. Studies have shown that children are trafficked from Bénin to Gabon to be used as domestic servants, from Mali to the Cote d'Ivoire to work on agricultural plantations, from Togo to Gabon, Nigeria, the Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso also on occasions to countries in Europe for use as domestic servants, market traders, child beggars and prostitutes[4]

According to the data of a report of the Eastern and Horn of Africa Conference on Human Trafficking and Forced Labor; while the countries of origin are Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania, the countries of Destination are Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. As cited in this report, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, Europe and the Middle East are the transit regions and countries.

#### *Asia:*

Most trafficking in Asia occurs within the region. While the main countries of origin are China and Thailand, the main countries of destination in the region are Thailand, Japan, Israel and Turkey. Southeast Asia is a key transit point both in and out of the region. The majority of child trafficking cases are in Asia, although it is a global problem. In Asia, Japan is the major destination country for trafficked women, especially from the Philippines and Thailand.

South Asia on the other hand the home of the second largest numbers of internationally trafficked persons, estimated to be around 150,000 annually. Migration within and between countries are also dramatically high. It is estimated that annually, more than 200 million people are on the move within and between countries in the South Asian region. There are currently an estimated 300,000 women and children involved in the sex trade throughout Southeast Asia.[5]

*North America:*

It is reported that North America is a destination region to which victims come from all main regions of origin. Most of them come from Asia and Latin America, but flows from Central and Eastern Europe are reported to be on the rise. The US Government estimates some 50,000 people are trafficked annually into the US from countries in Latin America, Eastern Europe, South-East Asia and beyond.

Among the other, Canada in the North America is the worst example for the problem in question. In 2004, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) estimated that 600-800 persons are trafficked into Canada annually and that additional 1,500-2,200 persons are trafficked through Canada into the United States. Furthermore, in a 2006 report the Future Group, a Canadian humanitarian organization dedicated to ending human trafficking, ranked eight industrialized nations and gave Canada an F for its "abysmal" record treating victims. The report, titled "Falling Short of the Mark: An International Study of the Treatment of Human Trafficking Victims", concluded that Canada "is an international embarrassment" when it comes to combating this form of slavery.[6]

*Middle East:*

Many women from Africa and Asia who work as domestic servants in the region find themselves coerced into situations of debt bondage or involuntary servitude. For example, many of the Iraqi women trying to escape from the atrocities of the Iraq War have been in a great danger of turning to prostitution, while others are trafficked abroad, to countries like Syria, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Iran. In Syria alone, an estimated 50,000 Iraqi refugee girls and women, many of them widows, are forced into prostitution[7]

*The Former Soviet Union:*

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the impoverished former Eastern bloc countries such as Albania, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine have been identified as major trafficking source countries for women and children. The major destinations are Western Europe (Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, UK, and Greece), the Middle East (Turkey, Israel, and the

United Arab Emirates), Asia, Russia and the United States. An estimated 500,000 women from Central and Eastern Europe are working in prostitution in the EU alone.

*Western Europe:*

Most victims come from Central and Southeastern Europe; others come from the Soviet Union, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The main destination countries are Belgium, Greece, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

*Central and Southeastern Europe:*

This region is also reported, although to a lesser extent, as a destination country with most victims originating in the former Soviet Union. Albania, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Romania are ranked "very high" as origin countries, followed by the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary Latvia, Poland and Slovakia.<sup>[8]</sup>

*Latin America and the Caribbean:*

The region is a place of origin, transit and destination for persons trafficked for sexual exploitation and labor. Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Mexico are among the states that most victims belong to these countries are taken to Western Europe and North America.

## **International Efforts to Tackle with the Problem**

With the becoming of trafficking in persons as a serious problem both as an issue for human rights violations and as a concern for security, there have emerged some efforts coming from the international arena to tackle with the problem. Among the others, in two 2000, there were adopted two new protocols to the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UN-TOC). The protocols on human trafficking and smuggling, or commonly known as the Palermo Protocols, came into force in 2004 and provide the most recent legal framework to fight against such a serious problem.

According to the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which supplements the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the trafficking in persons is defined 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, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of*

*organs.”*

As can be inferred from such a definition, the protocol on human trafficking provides a critical approach to the issue making *the exploitation and coercion* central aspects to be dealt with. With regard to the actions to be taken by the states, the protocol require the parties to the protocol to criminalize the relevant conduct of traffickers, to establish and implement the domestic law enforcement mechanisms, and to cooperate with other states to strengthen international prevention and punishment of these activities. Furthermore, the protocol pays particular attention to the situations of migrants and stipulates that they should not be subjected to criminal prosecution due to their illegal entry. Lastly, the protocols on human trafficking and smuggling require state to address the root causes of the problems within a comprehensive approach.

### **What to Expect from the Global Forum?**

As briefly discussed above, the issue of human trafficking has become a crucial problem affecting almost all the regions of the world. Furthermore, due to the deepening and intensification of the effects of globalization, what is discussed at the global forum is exactly about *the globalization of slavery*. Regarding the issue, the words of Mr. Costa seems quite enough to indicate the need for a global partnership: “It is time for the world to open its eyes to this form of modern slavery.” Therefore, against such a global problem organized and operated on a transnational scale, comprehensive and real solutions are urgent at the very least.

Generally speaking, in the ongoing conference, three issues are being discussed. The first one is one the root causes of the problem. Concentrating on the ‘push and pull’ factors, the Forum is expected to come up some suggestions related to poverty, gender-based violence, ethnic, racial, religious marginalization, conflict situations and marginalization. These crucial topics, in fact, lie at the heart of the problem and wait for meaningful solutions. The second topic to be addressed in the Forum is on the question of how human trafficking has an impact on the lives of individuals and their communities. This point particularly important as is directly related to the rehabilitation and (re)integration of those victims into the society.

In fact, these two points are quite important to firstly comprehend the problem itself and then look for enduring and real solutions to eradicate human trafficking. However, if one looks at the suggestions emerged before the conference to fight such a crucial issue, it seems that the Forum will act as another ‘talking-show’ rather than as *a real platform for real solutions*. Until now, the below mentioned points have been proposed[9]:

- tracking and blocking internet payments for human trafficking

transactions,

- innovative technology to pinpoint frequently used trafficking routes,
- help-lines to report suspected child prostitution or sex slavery,
- codes of conduct to curb sex tourism,
- improved controls on supply chain management,
- ways to stop the forced removal and trade of human organs.

It is out of question that these points are of utmost importance in any attempt to provide solutions to the problems. However, it is quite difficult to accept or believe that such measures are enough to find a meaningful solution to the problem. The main problem within the approach of international community, then, is as follows: The root causes are dealt with in a comprehensive manner; however, when it comes to the stage of providing solution, such platforms as Global Forum acts no more than 'talking-shows'.

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[1] See, [http:// www.swradioafrica.com/pages/fristever130208.htm](http://www.swradioafrica.com/pages/fristever130208.htm)

[2] See,

[http:// www.ungift.org/index.php?option =com\\_content &task=view&id=187& Itemid=497](http://www.ungift.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=187&Itemid=497)

[3] See, [http:// news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/ spl/hi/world/05/slavery/html/4.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/world/05/slavery/html/4.stm)

[4] See,

[http:// www.giftasia.in/index.php?option =com\\_content &task=view&id=207& Itemid=347](http://www.giftasia.in/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=207&Itemid=347)

[5] Ibid.

[6] See, [http:// www.humantrafficking.org/publications/371](http://www.humantrafficking.org/publications/371)

[7] See, [http:// aidemocracy.typepad.com /interdependent/2007/05/ human\\_trafficki.html](http://aidemocracy.typepad.com/interdependent/2007/05/human_trafficki.html)

[8] Ibid.

[9] See, [http:// www.unodc.org/unodc /en/press/releases/2008-02-12.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2008-02-12.html)



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[Back to Top](#)

	<b>USA's Kosovo Report -February 2008</b>		<b>Visit of Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko to Moscow</b>
---	---	---	---

[Homepage](#) | [Comments](#) | [Articles](#) | [Editorial](#) | [Europe](#) | [Middle East](#) | [Balkans](#) | [Caucasus](#) | [Central Asia World](#) | [Economy](#) | [National](#) | [Last 200 News](#) | [Comments](#) | [Homepage](#)

[Back to Top](#)

	<b>Chadian President Declares State of Emergency</b>		<b>Southeast Asia's Pakistan Problem (Fidel V. Ramos)</b>
---	--	---	---

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[Back to Top](#)



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[Back to Top](#)