

End the misery**Thursday 14 Feb, 2008**

British actress Emma Thompson, Latino pop star Ricky Martin and Egypt's First Lady Suzanne Mubarak have led international calls to end human trafficking at a UN forum.



The three were among guest speakers at the opening of an anti-human trafficking conference, the first ever to be organised by the UN on what is estimated to be a multi-billion-dollar industry. "When you look at the range of talent in this room, you would position the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking between Woodstock and Davos," said Antonio Maria Costa, director general of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. "Government statements, expert discussions, along with music, speeches, videos, films and art to inspire us all. I hope, by the end of the forum, a roadmap will be developed to guide us forward," Costa said in Vienna, Austria. He added: "This is not an inter-governmental conference, nor is it a talk shop.

Think of it more as a rally. We march together."

Attending the event were 1,200 experts, law enforcement teams, business leaders, NGO representatives and trafficking victims. Last December, following the largest coordinated police raids ever conducted in Dubai, which resulted in 247 arrests, Lieutenant General Dahi Khalfan, head of Dubai Police, said the country was "now declaring war against human traffickers".

UAE Attorney General Eassam Al-Humaidan added that the country would continue to take a strong stand against human traffickers and that anyone involved in the trade would be jailed for at least five years. Human-trafficking is involved in a number of crimes, ranging from forced labour and sexual exploitation to the removal of organs and body parts, the UN conference was told.

According to UN estimates, around 2.5 million people are being trafficked around the world at any given time.

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