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Human-trafficking affects all societies, industries, UN says

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Vienna - Human-trafficking is a crime permeating all societies, United Nations experts warned on Tuesday ahead of a large- scale UN conference tackling the issue. "I would not exclude any industry, with the possible exception of the nuclear industry, from being affected by human-trafficking; agriculture, construction or the textile industry are all affected," said Doris Buddenberg, head of the UN anti-trafficking forum UN.GIFT.

From February 13 to 15, about 1,000 participants from more than 100 nations are gathering in Vienna for the first large-scale UN human trafficking conference, hoping to raise awareness and propose concrete measures in the fight against the crime, that is rapidly developing into a global business worth billions of dollars.

"The conference is a milestone," Buddenberg said.

Almost everyone had already seen or - often unknowingly - interacted with a trafficking victim, Kriistina Kangaspunta, trafficking expert of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, told journalists, pointing out the true scale of the problem.

Human-trafficking should not be confused with illegal migration, she said. People-smugglers made their money from transporting illegal migrants, while human-traffickers committed the crime of exploiting their victims, using pressure, deception and violence.

An essential factor in understanding the issue was to see that human beings had become tradable, Buddenberg said.

"Human beings have become a cheap commodity for traffickers," she said.

People are trafficked from 127 countries to be exploited in 137 countries, UNODC said.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), around 2.5 million traffickers exploited at any point, including victims of forced labour or sexual exploitation, Kangaspunta

A major problem was lack of data, UN officials admitted, a problem they hoped would be r scale international survey currently in the works.

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A film forum and the large-scale installation entitled Journey, with British actress Emma Th attracted tens of thousands in London's Trafalgar Square in September, will help raise pu conference organizers hoped.

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