

National Statement for UNGIFT

The Vienna Forum presents an opportunity to increase the magnitude of and enhance the fight against human trafficking in all of its forms—whether it is the woman trapped in domestic servitude, the migrant worker ensnared in debt bondage, the prostituted girl held captive in a brothel, or the young boy enslaved to work in the mines. These are the faces of modern day slavery. They demand our attention, they cry out for justice, they yearn for dignity.

Human trafficking is a dehumanizing crime that turns people into slaves and sexual commodities. According to the U.S. intelligence community, of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked across international borders annually, 80 percent of victims are female, and up to 50 percent are children. Hundreds of thousands of these women and children are used in prostitution each year. This figure does not account for the many millions more trafficked within our own countries.

Human trafficking is a multi-dimensional threat. It robs people of

their basic rights and fundamental freedoms, it poses a global health risk, and it fuels the growth of organized crime, thereby spurring social breakdown and undermining the rule of law. These grim facts are well known—they are what spurred the launch of the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (GIFT) last year—a launch that rightly coincided with the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The same commitment to human dignity that propelled the abolitionist movement of old is at the heart of our commitment today to combat human trafficking. As this movement has reached a point of maturation, it is critical that we move beyond conferences, declarations and resolutions and match rhetoric with tangible action and concrete results. The urgency of our work necessitates nothing less.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is the road map outlining minimum requirements essential for combating human trafficking by the community of nations. By holding ourselves accountable, while at the same time recognizing the intrinsic value of partnering with the private sector--including

civil society organizations, business and the media, we increase the opportunities for an improved response and expand the resources that may mobilize to assist crime victims.

Over the next three days, we will all be attending a series of workshops centered on the conference's three themes of (1) vulnerabilities and root causes; (2) the human and social consequences of human trafficking; and (3) action to implement the Trafficking Protocol. I am hopeful that the call to action embodied in the third theme will be the defining legacy of GIFT.

International organizations such as the International Organization for Migration, ILO and the UN serve an important role in assisting committed governments and civil society organizations to meet international standards for combating trafficking. These organizations have the advantage of a bird's eye view of the global efforts to combat TIP and, therefore, can identify promising practices in one part of the world that can be replicated and customized in another region.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for example, a member of the UN.GIFT Steering Committee, adopted a comprehensive action plan in 2003 that was adopted by all 56 OSCE member countries and that complements the Palermo TIP protocol. The OSCE Special Representative for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings works with governments to turn their commitments into practice, and identifying new trends or gaps where additional action is needed, including the vulnerabilities of migrants.

Let me look back from the global view and give you a glimpse of some of what the U.S. is doing at home. The United States has confronted human trafficking on a multitude of levels recognizing our responsibility, not only as a global leader but also a destination country, to improve efforts to assist victims and throw traffickers in jail. In late 2000, the Congress passed and the President signed into law the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. This legislation created the office I direct and mandated the annual release of the Trafficking in Persons Report, which is our prime tool for diplomatic engagement and international awareness needed to achieve prevention. It institutionalized a cabinet-level taskforce, chaired by the Secretary of State, to improve coordination and

implementation of our anti-trafficking efforts. Strong Presidential leadership, Congressional commitment and support from a diverse coalition comprised of faith-based organizations, community, human rights and women's groups ensure that the United States' ground-breaking support for the movement to end human trafficking will continue to be a force for change in the global arena.

The legislation, which is being reauthorized this year, is in compliance with the TIP protocol and takes a victim-centered approach. Where once victims discovered by police were jailed and forcibly deported, today, far more victims are treated with care, allowing them to become survivors of this traumatic crime. We are moving toward a society where sex trafficking victims are not stigmatized or punished.

Since 2001, the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and U.S. Attorneys' Offices have increased by 600 percent the number of prosecutions compared to the 1995-2000 period. The United States has had four straight years of record-high convictions with sentences ranging up to 50 years.

42 local anti-trafficking task forces have been established in 25 states that work on investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases in the United States and rescuing victims. The task forces are led by US Attorneys and involve federal, state, and local law enforcement and NGO service providers recognizing the vital role of NGOs in assisting with the after-care of victims. This collaboration of government and civil society is crucial, and I've shared our experience in my travels as envoy to East Asia, South Asia, Russia, Mexico, the Middle East, as well as Western, Eastern, and Southern Africa.

Embodying a victim-centered approach, from 2001-January 2008 the U.S. Department of Homeland Security granted approximately 2,000 T visas to trafficked victims and their families allowing people to remain in the United States and assist federal authorities in the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases, thereby giving victims a place of refuge in the aftermath of gross exploitation. Additionally, human trafficking survivors from as many as 77 countries have been certified to receive certain U.S. federally-funded or administered benefits.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) launched in 2004 a nationwide outreach and educational campaign called Rescue and Restore. It also established the National Human Trafficking Resource Center which provides information and resources to victims of human trafficking and others seeking information. The Resource Center also makes referrals to local organizations that assist victims as well as to law enforcement agencies in order to help trapped victims reach safety. Over an 18 month period, the HHS national hotline received almost 4,000 calls resulting in more than 120 cases leads.

Official U.S. policy since December 2002 has recognized that prostitution is inherently harmful and dehumanizing and serves as a magnet for human trafficking. As such we have diligently opposed efforts to legitimize, even legalize, the prostitution of people and worked to confront the demand which perpetuates the evil of human trafficking. Furthermore, we have confronted the demand for commercial sex that perpetuates the evil of human trafficking. The so-called "johns" should be stigmatized and punished as much as the pimps.

Our abolitionist work reaches beyond our own shores. Each year the Secretary of State releases the annual Trafficking in Persons report that is an effective tool to raise awareness and channel resources to committed governments.

Importantly from a programming perspective, the report not only identifies trends, but it represents a guide for how U.S. Government foreign assistance is prioritized to assist governments to respond more effectively--to address those substantive trends and countries of particular concern. The United States has spent over \$528 million dollars for international anti-trafficking programs since 2001 in over 120 countries.

In our diplomacy we engage other governments worldwide encouraging tougher prosecution of criminals, greater support for victims, and stronger warnings and measures to prevent innocent men, women and children from being lured into insidious exploitation. In the last five years, over 100 countries have passed new laws or amended existing law to toughen penalties for human trafficking. But much remains to be done.

While we offer frank assessments of other governments, the United States must be accountable for its own efforts at home, not least as a Party to the UN TIP Protocol. Our own Department of Justice produces an annual report assessing U.S. efforts to combat human trafficking, recognizing that there is still ground yet to take in this fight domestically as well as internationally.

We are looking at root causes and prevention here. Ultimately there is no simple solution to defeating modern day slavery. Among root causes, ending poverty alone will not end trafficking. It is not just poverty and desperation that make human trafficking possible, but also the extreme greed and sadism of the exploiters and the catalyst of corruption. Lack of government commitment, weak laws to hold exploiters to fullest account, failure to accord women and migrants status as rights-bearing humans in full, and officials' corruption must be addressed as urgent matters of prevention – matters of *governing justly*. The desire for commercial sex and for goods made by forced or child labor must also be addressed – matters of *confronting demand*. These two broad challenges underscore that it is critically important for every government represented at the Vienna Forum to dedicate resources

and the political will necessary to stop the acute exploitation and control of victims distinctive to human trafficking. We have it in our power to break the chains and set free captives of sex trafficking and forced labor, for their plight must not be mitigated or regulated but it must be eliminated. Universal human dignity requires it of us.