

Second Africa Regional Conference of the Santa Marta Group

Nairobi 1-4 October.

Message from HE Cardinal Vincent Nichols.

It is my pleasure and privilege, as President of the Santa Marta Group, to send you this message as you begin the Second Regional Conference.

I thank you all for gathering in Nairobi and greet His Grace Archbishop Philip Anyolo as Chariman of the Bishops' Conference of Kenya and Miss Elizabeth Mbuka of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Government of Kenya. I thank Mrs Margaret Maribor and Fr Mark Odion as Conference Directors and Fr Nicholas Makau and Bro Elias Mokuia for acting as Master of Ceremonies for the Conference. I thank the Dimesse Sisters for the hospitality they are providing.

I salute the hard work of so many of you attending this Conference against human slavery in many different sectors of society. I thank you for all your efforts. I rejoice in the cooperation in this work between so many partners, brought to light in this Conference. Recent years has seen a considerable growth in this work and cooperation. We are so much stronger when we stand together. I thank God for the generosity of spirit and care for the victims of human trafficking which characterise all of your work. Thank you very much.

Our work is as urgent and as important as ever. Yes, awareness of the evil of modern day slavery has increased enormously in recent years. Yet the problem is as widespread as ever and its perpetrators as determined and as ruthless as ever. We have to remember that human trafficking is a hugely profitable criminal activity and those who drive it forward are endless both in their greed for profit and in their callous disregard for the dignity of every person. They must be stopped and victims rescued, cherished and supported.

So too we have to look hard at the other factors contributing to this evil trade: poverty, lack of opportunity, corruption and the endless movement of people. I offer you every encouragement in your work together.

May I add how pleased I am that you are going to give special attention to the situation of children and the special need of protection that they have. Thank you.

I pray that our Heavenly Father will bless you during the days of this Conference. May these days be filled with joy and marked by your determination to serve God in this noble and vitally important mission.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.

Vincent Cardinal Nichols