



CONFERENCE SUMMARY

CASINA PIO IV, PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

8 – 9 FEBRUARY 2018

SESSION 1

REPORTS FROM AFRICA

Nigeria

Archbishop Akubeze, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, and Sr Monica Rowland, Sacred Heart of Jesus Sisters

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) anti human trafficking programmes have six main objectives; to reduce the prevalence of human trafficking through awareness raising, to facilitate the reintegration of victims, to act as a liaison to agencies or individuals that assist victims, to network and collaborate with government, to organise conferences and capacity building workshops and to create awareness of safe migration.

CBCN actively engages and advocates with law enforcement bodies and the government. Caritas Nigeria has trained people in Edo State to be advocates within the communities. The Catholic Church of England and Wales are working with the Church in Edo State to start a low skilled livelihood project on agribusiness 'Grow Edo', this will help by providing job opportunities for young people.

The Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus are running awareness campaigns and have focused on going to villages, to schools and to market places to talk to people about the danger about human trafficking and illegal migration.

They have designed a curriculum to be implemented in schools and have organised workshops. They also make use of social media like Facebook and WhatsApp. One of the major reasons why young people are open to being trafficked is the lack of jobs opportunities, to combat this, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cottage Industry has opened where young people can learn skills and training.

The sisters are part of the Edo State government taskforce to help returnees from Libya to be reunited with their families.

Mozambique

Sister Marinês Biasibetti, Episcopal Commission for Migrants, Refugees and Displaced Persons (CEMIRDE)

Sister Marinês Biasibetti shared that CEMIRDE ran awareness raising campaigns on the radio at national and regional levels. These focused on geographical areas that had the highest flow of migration.

At a national level Mozambique has approved legislation against trafficking, it is putting together a national plan of prevention and has integrated care centres and services for victims of gender-based violence.

Some of the challenges being faced are eradicating the belief that certain diseases can be cured through the use of human organs cured through human organs; integrating human trafficking into the catechism, corruption, combatting early marriages and how to offer young people more opportunities in the country of origin.

CEMIRDE is working to strengthen cooperation with other border countries; combat institutional corruption and introduce trafficking in the school curriculum.

Sierra Leone

David Yambasu, Caritas Bo

Sierra Leone has a population of 7 million people, with an inflation rate of 9% and proportion of population living in rural areas of 59%.

The population is very young which makes them more likely to be exploited. Hundreds of young men and women continue to be "recruited" as



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domestic workers, middle level skills providers by government through the ministry of labour and agents for countries including Libya, Iraq and Kuwait.

In October 2017 50 girls tried to be repatriated from Kuwait and 170 from Libya.

There is the 2005 Anti-Human Trafficking Act but its enforcements and implementation are 'discretionary' and most of the population do not know that the law exists.

The Church is advocating to welcome and integrate migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking and running national awareness raising campaigns.

The challenges are an absence of trained chaplains and lack of funds to support the rolling out of migration regulatory policies.

The recommendations on prevention are that the Church should lobby with national governments and social actors to design and enforce legislations. In terms of response, the Church should increase offices for the pastoral care of victims and should mobilise resources to improve inclusion.

SESSION 2

REPORTS FROM EUROPE

Lithuania

Fr Algirdas Toliatas, Lithuania Bishops' Conference and Ms Goda Aleksaitė (Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania)

In 2017, methodical recommendations on the prevention and the fight against THB were elaborated by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania in cooperation with the Catholic Church. Recommendations are aimed for the church on how priests can contribute too.

A few roundtable discussions together with an information dissemination campaign were organized by the Catholic Church. The priests have spread the message to their communities on threats of THB and exploitation for forced labour or services, and on possibilities to get assistance and support.

Additional efforts were devoted to strengthen the role of municipalities and involve local actors more in prevention of THB and in identification, referral and assistance of victims of this crime, implementing the transnational project "Strengthening the Role of Municipalities in the Work against Trafficking in Human Beings (STROM II)" funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Swedish Institute, coordinated by the Council of the Baltic Sea States Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (CBSS TF-THB), in Lithuania – by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania.

In 2017, the project resulted in developed procedures on the organisation and coordination of the fight against human trafficking on a municipality level including data collection and management, planning and implementation of preventive and victim assistance and protection (identification, referral and assistance) activities, monitoring and reporting, as well as training, complementing the work of civil society organisations funded by the state, thus, the capacities to ensure assistance, protection and support for victims of trafficking were expanded. In addition, local actors were trained on those issues.

Several municipalities adopted the procedures, arranged training and exchange of experiences among municipality actors on the organisation and coordination of the fight against human trafficking including tackling demand. The Catholic Church took part in the project activities as a partner of the coordination mechanisms contributing to awareness raising and consulting the communities on THB.



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A huge THB prevention campaign took place in September – December 2017 in Lithuania covering the whole country and reaching over one million of inhabitants and guests (based on calculations by services providers) through newly produced video clips and posters on four forms of THB (for sexual exploitation, for forced criminal activities, for forced labour and forced marriages), flyers introducing to different forms of THB and their indicators, and available assistance widely spread at public transport and public transport stops, post offices, public stands and ads boards, vulnerable families, schools, universities, churches with municipality staff, schools personnel, social care and assistance agencies, social workers at vulnerable families, children rights specialists, police, border guards, civil society organisations, etc.

Plans: to improve central government activity and decision making process in field of THB it is hoped a single coordination centre under the Ministry of the Interior will be developed. It will focus on counter-trafficking issues related to prevention, assistance and support. To support this initiative and help increase public awareness, an agreement between different stakeholders (ministries, prosecutors and NGOs) to mainstream activities and prevent duplication of activity is expected.

Poland

Deputy Director Irmína Gołębiewska, Polish National Police) and Bishop Krzysztof Zadarko, Polish Bishops' Conference

Poland sees a range of types of human trafficking human trafficking with victims coming from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and Bulgaria.

In 2004 the country adopted an action plan to support victims, raise awareness, develop partnerships and improve the policing response to human trafficking.

This has resulted in the creation of an inter-agency body with members of the police, state labour inspections, and NGOs.

Polish national and regional police have dedicated units tackling trafficking, a public helpline and a dedicated email address.

Officers have been issued guidelines to help distinguish the difference in human trafficking and smuggling cases which helps identify victims. Cross border activity has helped develop a Polish-Dutch prevention programme around forced labour in areas such as marijuana plantations.

Spain

Ms María Francisca Sánchez Vara, Spanish Episcopal Conference and Commissioner José Morán, Spanish National Police

Significant activity has been undertaken by the Christian community including the provision of training and prevention for young people, the creation of a public manifest on trafficking and the wide use of social media and a blog.

The Church encourages and prepares resources to celebrate prayer vigils during the World Day of Prayer for Human Trafficking and they have taken actions on World Day against Trafficking in Persons and European Day against Trafficking in Persons.

Church groups work with other institutions and groups to support victims and improve service provision.

The Spanish Police have developed an action plan to reduce demand, improve the identification and support to victims, increase investigations into criminal gangs and consolidate cooperation and collaboration at the international level.

This work has seen a steady rise in the number of victims being identified with over 600 in 2017.



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Greece

Dr Heracles Moskoff, Greek National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings

Greece is a transit country for refugees where migrants are vulnerable to exploitation. The law enforcement approach needs to be holistic, focusing on prevention whilst understanding the reasons that people globally move to Europe.

Recent developments in Greece include the establishment of a National Referral Mechanism for identifying victims of trafficking, specialised training for frontline professionals and a multi-language helpline where legal aid can be offered.

A parliamentary committee has been set up to monitor development and promote new legislation against trafficking in human beings.

Holy See

Inspector General Dr Domenico Giani, Vatican Gendarmerie

Human trafficking is one of the gravest crimes of our times. The Gendarmerie deals with human trafficking as a criminal action.

To uproot modern slavery, action is needed on two fronts; the technical action of the police and solidarity.

The Gendarmerie have also been involved with several projects in central Africa, Kenya, Iraq, Syria and Libya.

The Italian Church is working hard to combat human trafficking focusing on the reception of migrants and wider education to combat this phenomenon.

The Church has worked hard to ensure the UNHCR are in the right locations to support victims who arrive but try to prevent others travelling.

Recent contacts with Arab countries have shown that there is growing awareness of the dangers of becoming a victim and what agencies and others can do to protect the vulnerable.

SESSION 3

REPORTS FROM INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

Global Fund to End Modern Slavery

Ms Jean Baderschneider

Ms Jean Baderschneider focused on the role of the private sector in the global fight against modern slavery.

The Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) framework of action is to increase resources, engage governments, engage the private sector, fund transformative programmes and technologies and ensure robust assessment of impact.

GFEMS focuses on three funding themes; effective rule of law, business investments and sustained freedom.

GFEMS are engaging businesses as partners by building the business case for action, establishing a CEO exchange and executing financial innovation labs.

Talitha Kum

Sr Gabriella Bottani

Talitha Kum has 22 networks covering 5 continents. Their focus is prevention work including, changing behaviour, working to reduce demand and to avoid revictimization.

The Talitha Kum network is growing, they have received official request to set up networks in Ghana, Mozambique, Malawi and Caribbean



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islands. Priorities for 2018 include the new project 'Wells of Hope' in the Middle East, a study in the reality of trafficking and the identification of key groups and interfaith collaboration in Thailand.

Apostleship of the Sea

Fr Bruno Ciceri

Fr Bruno outlined the challenges of human trafficking within the seafarer and maritime industries.

The Apostleship of the Sea (AoS) is currently collaborating with the International Labour Organisation, the International Organization for Migration, the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, and seafarers' unions to promote seafarers' welfare and reduce their vulnerability.

The AoS have a pilot project with the Santa Marta Group to train workforces in ports to identify and report human trafficking, this has started in Tilbury (UK) and will be rolled out to ports globally.

International Organization for Migration

Dr Federico Soda

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) continues to observe concerning trends in human trafficking. Exploitation, abuse and selling of slaves has been widely reported in Libya and has had a knock-on effect in Europe.

The IOM is working with the African Union, the European Union and the UN about the situation in Libya. Nigerian women are the largest nationality and disproportionately represented as victims of human trafficking.

The IOM has noticed an increase in the number of unaccompanied minors. The main issues being faced are around identification and assistance. Identification is not too difficult but getting people out of exploitation is a big challenge. Thousands of

people are being identified but only few hundred are getting assistance. Dr Soda highlighted the role the Church can play in detecting victims, particularly unaccompanied minors.

Europol

Mr Wil van Gemert

Europol has now received more than 1,000 new cases, a 60% increase since 2014. Mr van Gemert shared examples of joint investigations that had led to successful arrests and victims rescued. The main trends observed by Europol were; inter-EU trafficking, diversification of the flow trafficking, an increase in labour exploitation, and the link to migrant smuggling and child trafficking.

SESSION 4

MEDIA

The UN System

Mr Alexander DesForges - Santa Marta Group and Mr Greg Burke - Holy See Press Office

The story of trafficking is complex and it requires sensitive handling. The challenge we have is combining the different cultures; the culture of policing, the long-term care of the survivors and the immediacy of media and how we can bring them together to benefit survivors.

We should see the media as an important ally in the fight against modern slavery; as they can cover both the demand and the supply side. Human trafficking is the perfect media story.

It is a story about people – a global issue that takes place locally. This combination of local human interest of a global issue offers an easy in for all media outlets. Our aim should be to introduce and facilitate media access; whether mass or social media.



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For TV, where the interviewing of victims is difficult and images are essential, it might be inviting TV crews on a police raid is the best way forward. Print media works for survivors of trafficking to tell their stories, so it would be worth working with newspapers, magazines and news sites to get the survivors' voices out. Social media is good for encouraging citizen awareness and activity – social media campaigns, especially through schools and other access points for young people should be undertaken.

The media can raise public awareness in a sensitive way: sensitive in interviewing the survivors but also to sensitize the public. Survivors are the best advocates in the fight against modern slavery and that is why we should work with the media to get their voices heard.

The media can also hold public bodies to account and help them be accountable to the public they serve. All police services and public bodies should make public commitments against which they are held to account.

If they do not make this public commitment, there is a danger others will impose their own measures of success and failure and in the absence of perceived progress the public will lose interest.

The media can create a culture that helps empower the public. E.g. 3-month campaign with the Evening Standard, where 2 million people a day saw these stories, which caused reporting to increase.

The media can also encourage citizens to hold their elected bodies to account as active, participatory citizens and also to use their consumer power.

As a first step, the public need to understand the problem and extent of modern slavery. Therefore, it is key to get involved with the local media to set up a campaign to raise public awareness and encourage activity.

Good work is being done but it needs to move beyond the people already involved and become part of everyday life.

SESSION 5

REPORTS FROM EUROPE (II)

Ireland

Assistant Commissioner John O'Driscoll, An Garda Síochána and Professor Dr Michael Breen, Mary Immaculate College

The Garda are the “Guardians of the Peace” they are community based, focusing on victims, and have embraced the Santa Marta Group model since its inception.

The North Atlantic Maritime Project to protect fishermen is a current initiative. This project includes varied stakeholders, beyond law enforcement, in training and meetings.

This is essential as law enforcement cannot be everywhere so they need others to inform them of the existence of vulnerable people.

As a consequence of creating awareness and engaging with more stakeholders, law enforcement have received more intelligence and recovered victims.

They plan ‘days of actions’ where different agencies coordinate to board vessels and ensure that there are no victims of human trafficking aboard.

Mary Immaculate College, An Garda Síochána and the Department of Justice are working on a collaborative research project, The Human Trafficking and Exploitation Project.

This will be data driven to document the scale of human trafficking and the awareness of people in Ireland of the problem.



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The project will create a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative overview of the problem and will a database of trackable information.

This will be used to create information material for dissemination to schools, colleges and wider public. The project has an executive board chaired by Kevin Hyland.

France

Superintendent Jean-Marc Droguet, Central Office for the Prevention of Human Trafficking of France and Ms Geneviève Colas, Secours Catholique - Caritas France

The majority of human trafficking in France is sexual exploitation, followed by labour exploitation. Victims come from Romania, Bulgaria, China and Nigeria, with the traffickers coming from Bulgaria, Romania and Albania.

France has made the fight against human trafficking a priority and developed public policy to help in this.

It aims to mobilise society, help detect victims and inform the public. As a result, the French police have helped dismantle 65 criminal networks in 2016, more than 800 perpetrators were arrested and more than 1000 victims identified.

Perpetrators have been sentenced to between 7 and 15 years in prison. They are providing victims with temporary redundancy permits to allow access to accommodation and work. Cross-border cooperation with Nigeria and Europol, through Frontex, is strong and helps in this fight as does collaboration with the Council of Europe focusing on young people.

There is still some confusion around the distinction between people smuggling and trafficking in human beings, which are different realities but are interconnected.

The government launched a workplan against trafficking from 2014-2016 but it lacked resources.

The Church is very involved in the fight against trafficking and continually accompanying the victims.

The Church engages in advocacy at local, regional, national and international level and have presented several proposals to the UN Human Rights Council, e.g. legal representative for children, to allow access to interpreters and develop training for professionals.

Secours Catholique have coordinated the movies “Invisible” and “Devenir” and presented at international rights festival in Kyrgyzstan.

UK

Bishop Patrick Lynch SS.CC, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, Minister Victoria Atkins MP, UK Government, and Mr Will Kerr, UK National Crime Agency

An extraordinary high proportion of victims of slavery in the UK come from countries with a high percentage of Catholics.

The Church is developing a collaborative response with the Dioceses and Bishops in those countries of origin. The Church is working with law enforcement partners to build trust, protect victims and prevent exploitation through practical partnerships.

The success in building trust with vulnerable communities is due primarily to the increased awareness and engagement of chaplains, lay leaders and clergy who understand the customs and cultures, and the language and dynamics within those vulnerable communities.

One challenge is to support and train those chaplains and leaders from these communities.



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Protecting victims is key and we recognize the outstanding support and care that women religious, Caritas and the Medaille Trust provide.

In the last three years significant efforts have been made at local, national and international level to build partnerships through which bishops, Local Government leaders and leaders of Local Police authorities can together confront the various forms of slavery that exist in their community.

The Santa Marta team has led the way by initiating or participating in several regional networks and awareness raising events throughout England and Wales.

Another important achievement in creating a much greater awareness of human slavery with the Church has been the introduction of the Day of Prayer for the Victims of Human Slavery on the Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita on February 8th.

By providing practical resources that can be used in parishes and schools the Santa Marta Group has helped to bring raising awareness regarding human slavery into the heart of the liturgical life of the Church. Finally, the CBCEW have developed a partnership with the Dioceses of Benin and Uromi to help the local Church in Nigeria combat the reality of slavery in Edo State.

The UK Prime Minister launched an ambitious Call for Action to fight slavery and more than 40 countries have endorsed it. The UK has doubled its overseas aid to tackle slavery overseas, and allocated £12m to Nigeria to help strengthen the judicial system and prosecutorial capabilities.

The UK has established more Joint Investigation Teams than any other EU state and we are now seeing the first prosecutions in UK courts under the Modern Slavery Act.

The NCA highlighted that there is still an evolving

picture of human trafficking in the UK and that intelligence for law enforcement is key.

Operational activity has increased significantly in the last year, with over 600 live operations resulting in over 900 arrests.

'Operation Aidant' helped throughout the UK to disrupt networks. It focused on key source countries: 5 Eastern European countries, Nigeria and Vietnam.

This also concentrated on key sectors; fishing, maritime, construction, and the sex industry. The NCA are running an exhibition called "Invisible People" to generate a public discourse and public debate and to humanise the victims of human trafficking.

SESSION 6

REPORTS FROM ASIA/AUSTRALIA

Myanmar

Cardinal Charles Bo, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar and Sister Jane Nway Nway Ei, Caritas Myanmar/ Good Shepherd Sisters

Human trafficking affects ordinary people who are deprived of a livelihood. In Myanmar officially 40% of people are living in poverty, but in reality it is around 60%. This is mostly made up of women and children.

A big issue is that work is not permanent which is a main cause for displacement to other countries. The Church cooperates with government around education and skill training for young people.

The work will continue to train the Church to respond to the need particularly through skills development for employment and trying to prevent young people from dropping out of education.



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Bangladesh

*Bishop Gervas Rozario,
Catholic Bishops' Conference Bangladesh*

In 2016 more than 600,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh with a significant number of unaccompanied minors.

Caritas Bangladesh has been involved to help them from the beginning. In 2014, 50,000 women and children were trafficked to Malaysia and Thailand.

The fundamental aim of Caritas is to empower and raise awareness in communities. Despite being predominantly a Muslim country, the commitment of Caritas is significant.

The focal point is the border region where most of the people, especially women and girls, are trafficked, mainly through India. Work is being done to raise awareness and connect with the local police to support the victims of trafficking who have been identified and returned.

Australia

*Assistant Commissioner Debbie Platz,
Australian Federal Police*

There are an estimated 4,000 victims of slavery in Australia. Australia is mainly a destination country for trafficking.

Recently, Australia has noticed an increase from South Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines. Most human trafficking is observed in agriculture and domestic servitude but also increasingly in forced marriages.

The Australian government has invested overseas aid to tackle this issue through a programme operated by the Red Cross, which provides clients the opportunity to recover and time to consider their options.

The Australian Federal Police have a number of dedicated human trafficking units. In terms of international operations, they have offices in 28 countries across the world to ensure regional engagement.

The police are running the "Look a little deeper" awareness programme for the police and other law enforcement bodies including the Border Force.

Thailand

Fr John Murray, Caritas Thailand

Thailand is primarily a source country for human trafficking mainly for labour exploitation. This year the first joint report was produced by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Thailand's Institute of Justice.

It highlighted that 90% of migrants come from the three neighbouring countries, and they are mainly in an irregular situation and in low-skilled work.

Thailand is a middle-income country with rapid development and need for cheap labour and this has fuelled human trafficking. A challenge being faced is that victims see the exploitation as acceptable as it is still better than "back home".

The Church is small in Thailand and most of their work is in the South of the country. With the support of Talitha Kum, Caritas has established the Catholic Network Against Trafficking in Thailand (CNATT) comprised of 24 members, religious orders, Caritas Thailand and dioceses.

There are the ongoing activities of community training, the PR campaign through the media, the direct support for victims and survivors. CNATT also acts to keep the bishops up to date on the situation and actively cooperates within the region on anti-trafficking efforts through Caritas Asia and its Caritas GMS (Greater Mekong sub-Region) anti-Trafficking Task Force.



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SESSION 7

REPORTS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA

US

Ambassador Callista Gingrich, US Ambassador to the Holy See

The US government supports the work of the Santa Marta Group. President Trump has pledged that the full force and weight of the US is behind the fight to eradicate slavery.

Recently the Secretary Tillerson gave \$25m to the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and with this funding, the United States is now investing in projects to eliminate all forms of modern slavery that align with the “3-P” framework of prosecution, protection, and prevention.

In the US, a victim-centred approach is used by federal law enforcement, which has made a significant impact on both the prosecution of human traffickers and the rehabilitation of victims.

Also, the US Congress recently appropriated an additional \$25 million to the Department of State for its efforts to end modern slavery.

Over three hundred NGOs and faith based organizations nationwide are engaged in this endeavour. Catholic Charities and the Young Men’s Christian Association are two of the most active participants.

Argentina

General Commissioner Néstor Roncaglia, Argentine Federal Police

Human trafficking is not only a Church’s or police’s problem, it is everyone’s problem, especially for those responsible for making political decisions. If there is poverty, if there is no education, if there is corruption, there is human trafficking. There is a growing awareness and training among the police,

but we still do not know the full extent or severity of the problem.

We have carried out in our country, together with representatives of the ecclesiastical organizations, three conferences in the last year, which focused on the training of police personnel, emphasizing the importance of focusing on the victim, sensitizing members of the security forces and detecting criminal organizations.

The Police is currently focused on protecting victims, as well as breaking criminal networks. It is also extremely important for prosecutors and judges to be involved in the fight against human trafficking, since they are responsible for the investigation and the sentences. The Police forces must create networks with other national police and especially with Interpol to join forces.

CELAM

Mr Elvy Monzant and Sr Rosita Milesi, Latin American Episcopal Council

Mexico, Guatemala, Salvador and Honduras have issues with organised crime where there can be complicity from the police. As well as rises in sexual and labour exploitation there are growing numbers of unaccompanied minors. CELAM have started a network called “Clamor” which works with refugees and victims of trafficking.

Brazil now has a national plan of action and has approved a new anti-human trafficking law which for the first time incorporates labour exploitation and illegal immigration as well as sexual offences. To support this national approach the Church have established a committee with civil society to help in this fight.



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US

Mr William Canny, US Conference of Catholic Bishops and Mr Peter Edge, Homeland Security

The US is a destination country for human trafficking, but also sees issues with illegal immigrants who are subject to exploitation. Even those with legal status can be exploited (e.g. agriculture, construction and manufacturing). The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) last year administered a federal government programme to provide case management services to over 200 foreign national victims of trafficking. Taskforces across the US, often including Catholic charities, work with victims from identification through to prosecution.

This collaborative work between Church and law enforcement allow shorter response times for victims. There is also work happening to help all Catholic associations to spot the signs of human trafficking. USCCB has trained activists from across the US to build up anti-trafficking capacity within the community. USCCB also run COMPASS, its anti-trafficking maritime programme. This year the USCCB programme 'dignity of work' will provide employment related assistance to prepare victims to enter employment through individual coaching, skill attainment and educational resources.

Homeland Security has 67 offices in 50 countries. They would like to replicate the work being done in the Archdiocese of Newark around the world. They want to ensure they are communicating, sharing information and taking their victim centred approach to all investigations.



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AUDIENCE

POPE FRANCIS

Cardinal Vincent Nichols' Address to the Holy Father

Most Holy Father,

Thank you for this privilege of meeting with you today. We recall with joy your presence, on the 10 April 2014, at the first meeting of this Santa Marta Group.

On that day, with your encouragement, we gave our commitment to develop partnerships in order to bring to justice those responsible for the horrendous crime of human trafficking and to care for all its victims. You gave your forceful and personal endorsement to this commitment and you reminded us that 'human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society - a scourge on the body of Christ.'

Today, in this meeting, the Santa Marta Group brings together from 30 different countries senior law enforcement officers, government ministers, religious sisters, bishops, priests and representatives of other organisations.

Today, in your presence, we renew our commitment to fight consistently and systematically against human trafficking.

Today we present to you the Reports of the progress we have made, in our respective countries, over the last two years. These Reports contain much that is positive and encouraging.

Indeed, Holy Father, we hope that you will be encouraged by what they contain. They present evidence of practical cooperation and effective responses; they give details of the prosecutions of criminals and of the care of their victims.

They tell of growing relationships of trust and of initiatives aimed at the long term prevention of trafficking in the countries of origin of its victims.

In these Reports we read of the emergence of good leadership - the wise use of authority; we read of a growing exposure of this great evil, whereby hidden misery is becoming more visible and silent cries of despair are heeded and heeded.

While the Reports give details of thousands who have been rescued and brought to freedom, they also contain expressions of frustration.

This growing sense of frustration is also a sign of progress as it expresses our strong determination to see the elimination of human trafficking given a greater priority and tackled with more urgency.

In our meeting we are looking in more detail at work being carried out in number of places and situations which demonstrate some aspect of this work.

In Nigeria we see efforts being made to tackle the root causes of human trafficking by developing the creative use of land; in Ireland great strides are being made to stop slavery at sea; we see the international reach of this trade, in Colombia and the United States and the need to set modern technologies against it; from Lithuania and Argentina we have heard of much closer cooperation between the Church and the Police being established.

We heard, so distressingly, of the trade in human organs and body parts which is being fought against in Mozambique. We have also studied projects in Australia, the Middle East, Brazil and the Netherlands and see real progress in Germany, Spain and Poland. We have had a positive focus on the importance of legislative change in this fight against modern slavery and on the particular vulnerability of children in our world today.



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We are grateful for the way you urged the United Nations to include the eradication of human trafficking in its Sustainable Development Goals and for the role played in securing this by the Holy See together with the United Kingdom and members of the Santa Marta Group.

Holy Father, we want, above all, to thank you for the personal encouragement and inspiration you give to us all, whatever our profession or vocation.

In presenting our work to you, we know that all we do is done in the sight of God, who surely weeps at the suffering of so many of His beloved children.

Here, today, we know that we are accountable to Him for all our efforts and our failures and ask you, Holy Father, to bless us in His name and strengthen us in our resolve.

And we most certainly promise you our prayers and affection today and always.

Greeting from the Holy Father

Dear Brother Bishops,
Dear Friends,

I am happy to greet you, the members of the Santa Marta Group, at the conclusion of your Conference, which is devoted this year to providing a worldwide perspective on human trafficking and modern slavery.

As leaders in law enforcement, research and public policy, and pastoral assistance, you offer an essential contribution to addressing the causes and effects of this modern-day scourge, which continues to cause untold human suffering.

It is my hope that these days of reflection and shared experiences have brought into clearer light the interplay between the global and local aspects of human trafficking.

Experience shows that such modern forms of slavery are far more widespread than previously imagined, even – to our scandal and shame – within the most prosperous of our societies.

God's cry to Cain, found in the first pages of the Bible – "Where is your brother?" – challenges us to examine seriously the various forms of complicity by which society tolerates, and encourages, particularly with regard to the sex trade, the exploitation of vulnerable men, women and children (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 211).

Initiatives to combat human trafficking, while concretely aimed at dismantling criminal structures, must increasingly consider broader issues associated, for example, with the responsible use of technology and the communications media, to say nothing of exploring the ethical implications of models of economic growth that privilege profit over persons.

I trust that your discussions in these days will also help to raise awareness of the growing need to support victims of these crimes by accompanying them on a path of reintegration into society and the recovery of their human dignity.

The Church is grateful for every effort made to bring the balm of God's mercy to the suffering, for this also represents an essential step in the healing and renewal of society as a whole.

Dear friends, with gratitude for your commitment and cooperation in this vital area, I offer my prayerful best wishes for your continued work.

Upon you and your families, and upon all those whom you serve, I invoke the Lord's blessings of wisdom, strength and peace. And I ask you, please, to remember to pray for me.