

Joint Statement on Trafficking in Persons and Contemporary Forms of Slavery

Delivered by Caritas Internationalis¹, Anglican Alliance

*at the Fifth Thematic Consultation on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration:
“Smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery, including
appropriate identification, protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking victims”*

Vienna, 5 September 2017

Dear Co-Facilitators or Chair,

Human trafficking and slavery are a “crime against humanity”, they violate the very essence and nature of human beings and their capacity to build flourishing relationships and communities that promote the common good. Migrants, who are searching for safety and a better life, are in a particularly vulnerable situation: in the absence of safe options for their journey, they often become victims of human trafficking.

Caritas and other Faith Based Organisations work with migrants, refugees and victims of trafficking at grassroots level. We directly assist victims of trafficking, prevent trafficking in vulnerable communities and advocate for the implementation of anti-trafficking legislation.

In the New York Declaration, States recognised ‘that refugees and migrants are at greater risk of being trafficked and of being subjected to forced labour’. States pledged to combat human trafficking through targeted measures to identify victims of it or those at risk of trafficking, and to prevent human trafficking among those affected by displacement. They also committed to establishing or upgrading national and regional anti-human trafficking policies.

In order to live up to these commitments we offer the following recommendations, based on our experience of addressing trafficking among migrant and refugee populations:

1. It is crucial that States increase their capacity to properly identify and subsequently protect and assist victims. The main challenge is the identification of cases of human trafficking among refugees and migrants. According to Caritas organisations working in the field, due to the proliferation of conflicts, which mainly affect civilians and which result in an unprecedented number of forcibly displaced people, human trafficking and exploitation seem to be on the rise. Therefore, more resources should be allocated to increase the identification of possible victims and referral capacities among a wide variety of front-line responders to migrants, such as social workers, doctors, police, religious people and others. All stakeholders should put in place better protection systems for people at risk and provide assistance to survivors during and after emergencies. Emergency response programmes, whether during the conflict phase or in support of exiled people, need to upscale their efforts to address the exploitation or presence of vulnerable groups, such as children, especially those without a family guardian, unaccompanied women or persecuted minorities².

¹ In particular with contributions of Caritas Ukraine, Secours Catholique, Caritas Spain

² The research-action on Trafficking in Human Beings in conflict and post-conflict situations, by Secours Catholique, July 2016

2. States should establish regular collaboration mechanisms with civil society organisations especially regarding the identification of victims of human trafficking. Many survivors first approach civil society and faith-based organisations for assistance and status recognition, very often because of lack of trust towards State institutions. The important role of Civil Society Organizations should be recognised and supported by States by establishing regular consultations with civil society organizations, implementing the function of a special rapporteur on human trafficking and undertaking other actions.
3. Human trafficking feeds on misinformation and ignorance. By acknowledging this key-contributing factor, we are highlighting the perceived disconnection between governments and the populations within their sphere of influence, which are vulnerable to becoming victims to human trafficking. It is recommended that governments work to put into place better communication and consultation processes with the vulnerable populations identified or promote peer education programmes, involving survivors of trafficking. These processes will require the investment of resources and the appointment of personnel to assure good consultation and effective communication in the acquisition of helpful information and knowledge to combat human trafficking.
4. It is of the utmost importance to establish more efficient and agile mechanisms of identification and assistance to victims including National Referral Mechanisms to provide adequate longer-term protection. Some of our member organisations highlight that the process of recognising victim status is complicated, long and centralised. Survivors are forced to wait long periods to be recognised and receive public sector assistance. Local units for the identification of victims, including law enforcement agencies, should be strengthened and adequately trained to quickly identify victims of trafficking and understand that they require protection and not, as in cases where they have been forced into illegal activities, treat them as criminals.
5. Unaccompanied or isolated migrant minors need referral to and support from a national child protection system based on a legal framework with the capacity to protect them from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. These children are at an increased risk of trafficking both throughout their journey and in overcrowded camps. Many disappear whereas some are exploited to survive or retained in captivity to be exchanged for a ransom.
6. Finally, the most “...urgent priority in this context is the provision of safe, legal channels for refugees. We need corridors for all different types of people on the move—long-term and short-term, for protection and for economic reasons, temporary and permanent. This requires far more collaboration at both the bilateral and multilateral levels.”³

³ Ethics in Action for Sustainable and Integral Development: statement on migration, 6 June 2017