

**Final message from the conference on human trafficking  
within and from Africa held in Abuja, Nigeria**  
*from 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2016*

1. We, the representatives from Catholic and other faith based organisations from 43 countries engaged in fighting against human trafficking, over half of them from Africa, gathered in Abuja/Nigeria from the 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2016 to discuss human trafficking within and from Africa. Following the call of the 2014 declaration of Pope Francis and other faith leaders on eradicating modern slavery by 2020, we came together to reaffirm and commit to collaboration and common action aiming at preventing and eradicating the scourge of human trafficking and exploitation of human beings and upholding human dignity. We aim to build our collaboration on each other's strengths and avoiding duplication in order to build 'One Voice' against human trafficking.
2. The suffering of the victims of human trafficking, exploitation and the impunity of the criminals and traffickers challenge us to take increased collaborative action.
3. Furthermore we are challenged by the fact that victims of trafficking are often invisible to society and it is sometimes only by chance that they can escape from their exploiters. For every one victim found, there are 100 or more undetected victims and some may never live to tell their tales of woes.<sup>1</sup>
4. We acknowledge that trafficking in human beings affects all people and appeals to all faith. The centres of final destinations are not only in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Gulf States, but in all continents and countries. There are therefore enough reasons for interfaith cooperation to act together to promote human dignity and defend the freedom of each person.
5. We listened to the voices of survivors of human trafficking. We were touched by their courage to give testimony and by their engagement to turn their suffering into a resource to prevent trafficking of other women, men and children through education and to rescue victims of this crime. We thank them for the work they do and the hope they give to other victims.
6. During our deliberations we touched upon different sectors in which trafficking occurs: child trafficking, trafficking during crisis situations, trafficking in the maritime industry, trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation. At the root is the interconnection of lack

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Ngozi Ezeilo, Joy: Key note address "Challenges in combating human trafficking and exploitation from the perspective of International law"

of good governance, consistent law enforcement response, environmental degradation, abject poverty, lack of education and opportunities for earning one's own living and a culture of indifference. These create vulnerability and dependence, making people prey for traffickers.

7. We acknowledge that the Sustainable Development Goals and their implementation are an opportunity and a framework to engage in the eradication of modern forms of slavery and human trafficking.
8. We commit ourselves
  - a. to ensuring a person-centred, holistic, human rights-based and non-judgmental approach with regards to survivors of human trafficking in the services we provide;
  - b. to mainstreaming the issue of human trafficking in other pertinent areas of our social pastoral work, such as health care and psycho social counseling, decent work, education, youth work and emergency response;
  - c. to engaging in reflections in our respective organisations and with the communities we serve, to address the demand side for cheap labour and sexual services;
  - d. to educating families and communities on the risks related to internal and international migration and provide them with means on how to protect themselves from exploitation and slavery. Sadly, family members, often involuntarily, play into the hand of traffickers, by following customary or cultural patterns, such as early marriage, wrongly understood charity and solidarity, and traditional religious practices. Families can also hamper the healing of a survivor by exclusion from the family and community;
  - e. to engage and train religious leaders and other key actors within our faith communities/Churches on human trafficking so that they are prepared to speak out against this scourge. As recognized leaders in their communities they should use all opportunities of their ministry to sensitize and educate their "flock" both to enable them to protect themselves against vulnerabilities leading to human trafficking as well as being compassionate towards those who were victims of trafficking;
  - f. to using media to reach out to people vulnerable to trafficking, including survivors of human trafficking who contribute to prevention by transforming their suffering into a resource for others and speaking from their own experience;
  - g. to actively contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically those connected to human trafficking in order to leave no one behind, by engaging with governments offering our experience gained through

pastoral care and services offered to people and advocating for their rights and appropriate policies;

- h. to raising awareness about less-known areas where trafficking occurs, such as trafficking in the maritime industry or trafficking in crisis situations, (e.g. conflicts or natural disasters);
- i. to getting engaged in collaboration and networking between Christian and other faiths organisations and with various stakeholders using existing platforms such as COATNET and others.

11. We call upon governments:

- a. to develop humane migration and welcoming integration policies, including lawful and safe channels for labour migration. Migration is part of human history and can be a survival strategy. They should use the opportunity of the Summit on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants on 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2016 to also address human trafficking frequently occurring during these large movements;
- b. to ratify and implement international conventions and protocols pertinent to the issue, such as the UN Convention on International Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocol, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the ILO Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers, the ILO Protocol on Forced Labour and the ILO Convention concerning work in the Fishing Sector;
- c. to live up to their commitments by putting in place policies and measures that reduce vulnerability and provide protection against modern forms of slavery and human trafficking and by allocating the necessary human and financial resources to them. First and foremost accessible education, efficient social protection systems and decent jobs are needed; moreover efficient protection for victims, such as shelter, legal and psychological counselling, opportunities for rehabilitation coordinated by a National Referral Mechanism and effective and consistent law enforcement mechanisms;
- d. to recognise and support the work and experience of Faith-Based Organisations benefitting communities and victims of trafficking by including them in the design of policies which tackle the root causes and consequences of human trafficking.

The conference came about upon the initiative of Caritas Nigeria, supported by Caritas Africa and was co-organised by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People and Caritas Internationalis. The participants were addressed by high level representatives of the local and universal Catholic Church: H.E. Cardinal John Onayekan, Archbishop of Abuja; H.E. Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, President of Caritas Internationalis;



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
DE SPIRITUALI MIGRANTIUM  
ATQUE ITINERANTIUM CURA

Archbishop Augustine Kasujia, Papal Nuncio to Nigeria; Msgr. Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences; Msgr. Robinson Wijesinghe, Director of Office of the Pontifical Council of Pastoral Care for Migrants and Itinerant People; Bishop Gabriel Justice Anokye, President of Caritas Africa and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar and Bishop Lucius Ugorji, President of Caritas Nigeria.

They were also addressed by experts from national, regional and international organisations: The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons of Nigeria, the Anti-Slavery Independent Commissioner of the United Kingdom, the African Union, the International Labour Organization and Prof. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, former UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, the Apostleship of the Sea, the network of religious sisters, Talitha Kum, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations and Jesuit Refugee Service were also represented at the Conference alongside with representatives from other Christian Organisations and Churches, such as the Anglican Alliance, the Church of Sweden, the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, and a Muslim organisation, Nasrul-Lahi-L-Fatih Society of Nigeria. Among participants were representatives of the Bishops' Conferences and Caritas organisations of Africa, Europe, Asia and the USA.