

Joint Statement

by Caritas Internationalis and the Anglican Alliance at the High-Level Meeting on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

New York, 27 September 2017

Dear Chair,

This is an ecumenical statement of Caritas Internationalis and Anglican Alliance. CI has an ECOSOC status, it is present in 200 countries and territories with 1.5 mln staff and volunteers.

Human trafficking and slavery constitute 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.

Caritas, the Anglican Alliance and other faith-based organizations work with vulnerable groups such as 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 operating through the Network of Christian organizations against human trafficking – COATNET¹.

We commend Member States of the United Nations for their determination to prevent and combat trafficking in persons through the implementation of the Global Plan of Action. In particular, we support the Member States’ efforts set out in the Global Plan of Actions (art. 3) to ensure that the promotion and protection of the human rights of victims of trafficking in persons are at the center of initiatives to combat human trafficking. We also support the Global Plan’s efforts to strengthen processes of identification of victims of trafficking among vulnerable populations, as well as to acknowledge the important role of civil society organizations in providing assistance and empowerment to victims of trafficking.

In order to reinforce the points mentioned above we offer the following recommendations:

1. It is crucial that States increase their capacity to properly identify and subsequently protect and assist victims in humanitarian emergency situations. One of the main challenges is the identification of cases of human trafficking among vulnerable populations, such as refugees and migrants. According to Caritas organizations’ experiences, the proliferation of conflicts, which mainly affect civilians and result in an unprecedented number of forcibly displaced and thus vulnerable people, contributes to the increase of human trafficking and exploitation. 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, medical staff, police, and religious people, among others. All stakeholders should put in place better protection systems for people at risk and provide assistance to survivors during and after emergencies.
2. It is of the utmost importance to establish more efficient and agile mechanisms of assistance to victims, including National Referral Mechanisms, in order to provide adequate longer-term protection. Some of our member organizations have pointed out that the process of recognizing

¹ www.coatnet.org

victim status is complicated, long and centralized. Survivors are forced to wait long periods to be recognized and to 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 provide them with a legal status as well as assistance and protection as victims and not treated as subjects of the criminal justice system, if they had been forced into illegal activity.

3. We urge States to establish regular collaboration mechanisms with civil society organizations, especially regarding the identification of victims and the provision of protection and rehabilitation services. Many survivors first approach civil society and faith-based organizations for assistance and status recognition, very often because of lack of trust towards State institutions. Moreover we recommend implementing the role of national rapporteur on human trafficking.
4. 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 of 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 programs involving survivors of trafficking.
5. We call on governments to ensure that these measures and processes are well resourced with financial means and well trained experts in order to ensure good consultation and effective communication in the acquisition of helpful information and knowledge to combat human trafficking.

Thank you for your attention.