



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM
DE SPIRITUALI MIGRANTIUM
ATQUE ITINERANTIUM CURA

Talitha Kum
ARISE



DOMINICANS
FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE



Oral Statement submitted for the Eighth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime by Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Charities), the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, the Worldwide Network of Religious Life against Trafficking in Persons (Talitha Kum), Dominicans for Justice and Peace, Migration and Refugee Services of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales on Agenda 2 (b) – Trafficking in Persons Protocol

Mr President,

Caritas Internationalis, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, the Worldwide Network of Religious Life against Trafficking in Persons (Talitha Kum), Dominicans for Justice and Peace, Migration and Refugee Services of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales strongly support the ratification and implementation of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, in particular the Trafficking in Persons Protocol (Palermo Protocol) and adoption of the Review Mechanism of the Convention. The signatory organizations would also like to highlight the importance of a stronger civil society organization presence, including faith-based organizations, in the future Review Mechanism and in the national coordination of anti-trafficking activities through promotion of law enforcement partnerships and NGOs' assistance of victims.

One of our priorities is to serve exploited people, including trafficking victims, as well as to promote regaining justice for them. We do this through coordination of the Christian Organizations Against Trafficking in Human Beings Network (COATNET), Talitha Kum and other networks with a view to facilitating transnational assistance and support for victims and protecting the most vulnerable groups, especially migrants, from trafficking and abuse. We work with people trafficked worldwide on a daily basis.

Last September, COATNET, Caritas Internationalis and the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People organized an International Conference on Human Trafficking within and from Africa, held in Nigeria, with Christian organizations' representatives from 43 countries and Muslim representatives from Nigeria.

Evidence given by participants and survivors of human trafficking show that without robust collaboration between government agencies (especially regarding law enforcement) and civil society organizations, the response to the crime of trafficking will be less effective. Victims have



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considerable confidence in civil society organizations, including Church structures, to accompany them during legal procedures. The strong potential of Churches and faith-based organizations to reach the most vulnerable communities, and to build trusting relations and educate communities, may prevent abuse by raising awareness. Without effective action from governments, the response will not be strong enough to tackle the crime of trafficking.

In the final declaration, participants emphasized that governments should live up to their commitments by putting in place policies that reduce vulnerability and provide protection against human trafficking, and by allocating the necessary human and financial resources to them.

We would also like to draw your attention to two forms of trafficking that are still not sufficiently worked upon and known about: trafficking in crisis situations, and trafficking in the maritime industry.

Our organizations working in the field condemn evidence of human trafficking among displaced people and refugees. With the proliferation of various forms of conflict around the world, which mainly affect civilians, human trafficking and exploitation appear to be increasingly prominent.

Christian organizations concerned about this issue intend to study its characteristics and raise awareness among stakeholders. We are witnessing low identification among refugees, due to fear of reporting incidents and lack of protection for refugee trafficking victims.

We call upon governments and international organizations to address the issue and ensure that emergency aid programmes during the conflict phase and reconstruction programmes address the exploitation of vulnerable groups, such as children without a family guardian, unaccompanied women, or persecuted minorities. In transit and destination countries, special preparation of humanitarian personnel and availability of specialized services for victims of trafficking and violence are needed. Moreover, children are often used for criminal activities by traffickers. It is important that children are considered as victims of trafficking rather than criminals.

Due to the depletion of commercial fish stocks close to the shore and increasing demand for cheap seafood worldwide, the fishing sector is facing problems that directly impact fishers and



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their communities. Illegal, unreported and undocumented (IUU) fishing is currently proliferating, with trafficking is common among these operations. Under the complete control of their traffickers at sea, fishers often remain at sea for years at a time, enduring inhumane working hours and conditions, with little alternative but complying with their enslavers.

Catholic service agencies, as well as maritime chaplaincies, are uniquely positioned to make a real impact in the struggle against modern slavery at sea. The presence of Catholic pastoral and service organizations among this vulnerable population allows them to disseminate information about safe migration and anti-trafficking prevention, and enables them to identify trafficking during the course of their ministries.¹

To conclude, we welcome all the Conference of the Parties' efforts to promote cooperation and better coordination of anti-trafficking activities, including those mentioned above. Thank you for your attention.

¹ A global Catholic response to trafficking at sea currently underway is COMPASS, which stands for: *Coalition of Organizations and Ministries Promoting the Abolition of Slavery at Sea*. At a COMPASS Advisory Group meeting in Rome in July of this year, the foundations were laid for a lasting partnership between Catholic and non-Catholic organizations that will strengthen the coordination, collaboration and capacity of the worldwide response to maritime trafficking. Using the Advisory Group's expertise, COMPASS is creating an online e-learning platform with training modules for different audiences on various aspects of maritime trafficking, service provision, outreach and prevention. COMPASS is also creating a global information system that records in real time the range and diversity of the counter maritime trafficking activities carried out by the Catholic Church and COMPASS partners.