

# Human Trafficking at the Crossroads

Private-Public Partnership to Fight Human Trafficking

2-3 March 2009  
Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain



## Conference Report

International conference held under the Patronage of Her Highness Shaikha Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of the King of Bahrain.

Organized by



The Suzanne Mubarak  
Women's International Peace Movement



In partnership with



**UN.GIFT**  
Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking

**VITAL VOICES**  
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP



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## Introduction

The Conference "Human Trafficking at the Crossroads" was held in the Kingdom of Bahrain from 2 – 3 March 2009. It brought together more than 300 representatives from Governments, United Nations entities, non-governmental and international organizations, the business community, academia and civil society. Over one and half days, four interactive sessions and a roundtable were held. These sessions explored private-public partnership within the themes of National Strategies against Human Trafficking; Legal Framework and Criminal Justice Response; Engagement of Businesses against Human Trafficking; Prevention Strategy & Support; and the Role of the Media & Art/Culture. The event was extensively covered by national, regional and international media.

Increasingly aware of the risk posed by this global scourge, the Bahrain conference was a step forward towards generating consolidated support and political will from the region and beyond. All sectors of society proved to have an important role to play in tackling human trafficking. Governments are stepping up their efforts to address the root causes of human trafficking and develop counter measures. The private sector is increasingly recognizing the magnitude of the problem and its share of responsibility in tackling this issue in its own sphere of influence. The pivotal role civil society and non-governmental organizations play in highlighting the problem, in calling for action and in providing support to victims of trafficking has been greatly appreciated.

## Opening Session



The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Bahrain, H.E. Dr. Nizar Sadiq Al Baharna, welcomed participants and thanked H.H. Shaikha Sabeeka for her willingness and commitment to tackle the difficult subject of human trafficking. He recognised and praised the efforts of H.E. Suzanne Mubarak for launching the campaign "End Human Trafficking Now!". He also expressed his gratitude to all supporting governments, international organizations, and the business community for their invaluable support. He concluded that in spite of the important steps taken much more needs to be done before human trafficking can be eliminated.

Her Highness Shaikha Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of the King of Bahrain highlighted Bahrain's efforts to combat trafficking at both the national and international levels. She outlined the efforts taken in her country to bring this issue on the social and political agenda. Like many countries, the full appreciation of the magnitude and complexity of this problem was difficult to comprehend. Nevertheless, once understood it led to a series of steps taken. NGOs were encouraged to play their role, especially in victims protection, and the inter-governmental mechanism spearheaded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain worked on the formulation of a national strategy. Now, work is under way for the implementation of the anti-trafficking law adopted last January. She hoped that the conference would encourage more open dialogue on the issue in and around the region and worldwide.



H.E. Suzanne Mubarak, President of the Women's International Peace Movement, focused on "A Way Forward", emphasising the importance of eliminating the root causes of human trafficking, such as poverty, lack of education – both areas where she herself concentrated on over the past few years. She also pointed to the instrumental roles women and youth play, and called for the critical necessity of ensuring Internet safety, especially to prevent exploitation and abuse of children. She acknowledged the accelerated efforts of the United Nations and the pivotal role of civil society in protecting victims, raising global awareness and transforming public consciousness. She underscored the key role the business community plays in eradicating human trafficking and praised their support and involvement in the campaign "End Human Trafficking Now!".



Mr. David Arkless, President, Corporate & Government Affairs, Manpower Inc. and Special Envoy of the campaign "End Human Trafficking Now!", spoke from the "Business Leader Perspective". He urged all business leaders to endorse the Athens Ethical Principles and join the fight against human trafficking. While 15'000 businesses endorsed these Principles, there are many more that have not done so. He shared his disappointment in enlisting his fellow business leaders and was surprised that they didn't appreciate the benefit of opting for such an approach as an essential means of gaining the trust of people in our turbulent financial crisis. He vouched to continue his relentless support to this initiative.



Mr. Antonio Mario Costa, Executive Director of UN Office on Drugs & Crime focused on "Milestones Achieved". He emphasised the complex reality of human trafficking and how much it has evolved over the years because of the introduction of technology, failure of governments to act and apathy and ignorance in the private sector - for every company with a conscience there are thousands of others without a clue. He pointed out his disappointment in businesses to move more forcefully in eradicating this abominable crime which is principally operated by the private actors even if it is an illicit and illegal trade. To spur more businesses into action, the award for the business leader against human trafficking, overseen by UNODC and the SMWIPM's campaign "End Human Trafficking Now" will be presented next year for the first time. He stressed the importance of joining forces to establish initiatives that empower victims of human trafficking. He drew the attention to the recent *Global Report on Human Trafficking* launched by UNODC which while alarming, showing a net increase in the volume of trafficking it nevertheless provided challenges which he hopes all will raise to the occasion and contribute to eradicating this scourge which as he referred to "shames us all". He considered the conference of Bahrain a landmark and congratulated Her Highness Shaikha Sabeeka for this impressive gathering which will no doubt be followed by concrete follow up action. From his side and on behalf of UNODC he pledged partnership in moving ahead along the lines that this conference will agree to.



Many voices were heard on the global nature of this problem that went beyond national boundaries, and in which all countries were implicated one way or another. They called for this conference to become the platform from which ways and means of harmonizing our efforts against human trafficking are identified and the protection of victims pledged.

The opening session culminated in bestowing on H.E. Suzanne Mubarak the **UNODC Award of Recognition** by Antonio Mario Costa for her vision, dedication and leadership in her role as First Lady of Egypt in putting human trafficking on the national, regional and international agenda, in working relentlessly to improving the quality of life of children, in enhancing the status of women and in supporting the adoption of the child's law which criminalizes trafficking in all its forms. As Founder and President of the Women's International Peace Movement, she was the architect and founder of the campaign "End Human Trafficking Now!".







Panel of the First Plenary Session

## First Session

### National Strategies against Human Trafficking

Representatives of various member states shared their experiences in eliminating human trafficking – from overcoming denial and raising awareness, to ratifying crucial international instruments. It also included the adoption of national legislation and the implementation of training and capacity building programmes for relevant professions. Action plans were formulated that included creating shelters for victims of trafficking and working together with NGOs active in this field.

The launching of programmes to improve internet safety for children was considered of utmost importance. *The First Lady of the Dominican Republic, H.E. Margerita Cedeño de Fernández* shared the new tool for exchange of information namely "Internet portal for global use" called upon by the UN.GIFT Women's Leadership Council (WLC) as a contribution to eliminating human trafficking.

The United Arab Emirates are committed to strengthening their legislative system and are developing training programmes for the police forces and judges. They have dedicated two shelters that cater to victims of human trafficking and planned educational programmes for all those working in airports and other entry points for better detection of potential victims of human trafficking. From the business perspective several points were raised, including the enormous increase in profits for traffickers over the past couple of years. Establishment of an international helpline, that victims could easily access for help and assistance from anywhere in the world, was strongly suggested. In the Kingdom of Bahrain, traffickers when arrested have been prosecuted, fined and jailed above the minimum requirement. As cooperation is key in fighting this scourge, their national committee that coordinates actions against human trafficking has been working together with authorities in the source countries on how to implement the law against human trafficking more effectively. The committee also includes representatives from the civil society who report back the magnitude of the problem. The United Kingdom has shown its commitment to fighting human trafficking in many ways. The most recent example is the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Human Trafficking in Human Beings (will enter into force on 1 April 2009) – a key regional legal instrument guaranteeing rights and protection for trafficked persons. Japan has focused more on victim assistance programmes, such as provision of legal residence permits and rehabilitation of victims.

## Second Session

### Legal Frameworks & Criminal Justice Response

This session dealt with the impact of legal responses to human trafficking characterized by its criminal focus for victims' protection and ensuring criminal prosecutions for traffickers. The relation between an improvement of victims' rights protection and an increased number of convictions was pointed out by several panellists. Special attention was given to the need of training target state agencies that are crucial both in criminal prosecution and in victim protection. Training in identification skills that would include a gender dimension is a paramount in rescuing victims and providing them with specific help instead of criminalizing them. Lack of victim support approach is also the result of vague national legislation on trafficking, incorrect implementation of the international instruments and absence of will in building on the protection part of these instruments.

On the one hand, the security sector must be made aware of the patterns and trends of this complex phenomenon in order to improve skills in identification and prosecution of traffickers. On the other hand, information sharing and multi-agency approach needs to be encouraged to ensure consolidated action for protecting victims and their rights.

## Third Session

### Engagement of Businesses against Human Trafficking

The symbolic signing of declarations and proclaiming zero-tolerance whilst important is insufficient. More measurable steps need to be taken to ensure the implementation of such declarations and policies to combat human trafficking. Businesses need to examine their own operations and in particular their supply chain. Modern supply chains tend to be global in nature and are often characterized by a lack of transparency and responsibility. Companies that get goods and services from a variety of trans national sources are at risk of being implicated in human trafficking and should take pro-active steps in order to minimize this danger. The first step is to understand the complexity of their supply chain, the vulnerabilities and high risk areas. This should be followed by:

- Adoption of a strategic approach to combating those risks and vulnerabilities;
- Adoption of a code of conduct with high standards;
- Application of those standards to companies' operations as well as their supply chains;
- Monitoring compliance;
- Committing to continual improvement by addressing the shortcomings found through monitoring.

Finally, companies' operations and those of their supply chains should be submitted to third party or second party audits against a reputable standard, such as SA8000. Companies should ask their highest risk suppliers to become certified against such reputable standards or at the very least, agree to be audited against companies' code of conduct.

It is also imperative to foster many more trans-sector partnerships such as those between the private sector and government authorities. Sometimes, governments need to be more aggressive in guiding businesses operating in their countries. More efforts should be done to educate consumers who can be a secret weapon by making informed decisions about what they buy. Good business performance and performers should be awarded and benefit from being ethical.

Working to combat human trafficking is not only the right thing to do. Ethical businesses that actively seek to reducing the risk of forced labour and human trafficking within their own operations as well as supply chains, will benefit their bottom line by protecting their brand and reputation, ensuring and even increasing access to markets, reducing turnover and increasing recruitment and retention rates, as well as reducing the risk of future litigation or regulatory violations.

## Fourth Session

### Prevention Strategy & Support

The fourth session highlighted the challenges for building support systems. Among the first obstacles counted in building these systems is overcoming denial. Secondly, no single actor can end the modern slavery on its own. It requires governments, civil society and private sector to join forces and work together. There are many success stories to be shared - launching help lines for victims of trafficking and setting up shelters, establishing think tanks composed from private-public representatives to study in depth the parameters of this phenomenon, as well as methods that proved to be effective in the prevention and support of victims. Among the successful processes cited was establishing grass-root partnerships, working with trade unions and involving youth. However, it was pointed out that support to victims go beyond provisions of shelters, which is a temporary solution, to that of shouldering them during the court proceedings, and making available interpreters – for many trafficked victims do not speak the language of the country they were trafficked in. Many of them are disoriented, have been abused, and require medical counselling and support. Anti-trafficking policies should therefore include three components: economic empowerment, community involvement and awareness, training and capacity building of stakeholders and victims' support systems. According to the International Organisation for Migration experience, it is imperative that the prevention strategies take place both in countries of origin and countries of destination.

## The Media & Art/Culture

Brainstorming session concentrated on the important role of the media and the world of culture in the fight against human trafficking. The panel consisted of members representing the media from the region and beyond, movie actors, producers and film directors who utilize their visibility and popularity to highlight the issue of human trafficking within their respective domains. Those involved in movie production directed and produced movies and short clips working closely with shelters and relevant organisations that focus on trafficking. Others continue to speak out extensively to raise awareness of the wide public on the issue.

The outcome of the brainstorming session was a statement of commitment read at the closing session.



## Closing Session



H.E. Suzanne Mubarak pronounced the **Manama Declaration on Human Trafficking at the Crossroads** unanimously adopted by conference participants (see Annex). She thanked Her Highness Shaikha Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa for her efforts and commitment to eradicate human trafficking and acknowledged the leading role taken by the Kingdom of Bahrain in bringing the issue to the forefront not only in the region but on a global scale.

Selected participants offered their commitment in support of the Declaration as follows:

H.E. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the United Nations General Assembly emphasised the shameful and sinful nature of slavery, whether in its ancient or modern forms, and said, it has no place in our world today. He urged all individuals to tap into their reserves of moral courage in order to carry out the changes needed to ensure freedom for all men and women. He voiced his support for the United Nations General Assembly Global Action Plan which will provide a blueprint for a global action on the ground, bring together punitive and restorative measures, and join the development, justice and security dimensions into a common endeavour.

Mrs. Marianna Vardinoyannis, spoke in her capacity as Board Member of the Women's International Peace Movement and confirmed that both her husband – the President of Motor Oil – and herself would continue to support the Movement's campaign against human trafficking to the best of their capacity. She proposed that reconvening in two years as called for in the Declaration should be held in Cairo to assess the progress in implementing the provisions of the Manama Declaration.

Mr. Samih Sawiris, CEO of Orascom Holding Development, spoke on behalf of the business community. He urged all members from the business community to invest their resources in areas where it would make a difference and called upon them to join the business community's fight against human trafficking. He suggested that as a means to gain airtime space businesses should request, as part of their publicity campaign, that for each dollar spent the equivalent of five dollars free time should be provided by the respective TV channel for the campaign "End Human Trafficking Now!". In this context, he also announced a donation of \$ 500'000 to the Campaign for its advocacy programmes. He also offered to support the creation of shelters for victims of trafficking and urged fellow business leaders to take initiatives within their companies that go beyond making profit to that of eradicating all forms of exploitation including forced labour and trafficking.



Egyptian actress Yousra, well-known for her humanitarian work that spans over many years gave a detailed account of the time when she first witnessed a case of abuse in Egypt. This motivated her to start her own campaign against all forms of human rights abuses. She pledged her support to anti-trafficking initiatives through media and art and read the following declaration on behalf of the participants in the brainstorming session:

*"We from the media, arts and culture industries resolve to use our talents, networks and resources to raise awareness about slavery in its modern forms. Individually and as a group, we will push for change towards the goal of eliminating slavery in all its forms and provide victims of slavery with opportunities for a better life and the decent work that is deserved by all."*

## ANNEX

### MANAMA DECLARATION ON "HUMAN TRAFFICKING AT THE CROSSROADS"

Kingdom of Bahrain, 2 – 3 March 2009

The participants of the Manama International Conference express their deep appreciation to Her Highness Shaikha Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of the King of Bahrain and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their commitment and contribution to the success of our conference concluding in this Declaration.

We commend the Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement for initiating the campaign "End Human Trafficking Now!" in 2006. The Athens Ethical Principles adopted then are even more relevant today, particularly as we are facing crises of unprecedented magnitude. We need to work even harder for the protection, safety and dignity of vulnerable groups, especially women and children, whose very survival is threatened.

*We recognize in this moment of crisis that we need to exercise leadership by:*

1. Working with the private sector to achieve zero tolerance for human trafficking by adopting the Athens Ethical Principles.
2. Encouraging governments to implement national strategies to end human trafficking according to the UN Protocol<sup>1</sup>.
3. Urging the adoption and implementation of national legal frameworks to include human trafficking as a criminal offence and ensure the protection of victims.
4. Requesting regional entities to develop frameworks to enhance inter country collaboration to end human trafficking between countries.
5. Urging the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a Global Plan of Action against Human Trafficking.
6. Publicly acknowledging ethically based business practices as a major contribution towards restoring confidence in the private sector.
7. Requesting business partners to include elimination of human trafficking in their corporate social responsibility programmes.
8. Requesting industry associations and international standards organizations to work towards including elimination of human trafficking within their standards.
9. Supporting the creation of help lines and networks of services required for victims of trafficking.
10. Encouraging the media and the cultural and artistic communities to continue their leadership in awareness-raising and disseminating best practices.
11. Strengthening information sharing on progress made.
12. Ensuring the continued support of the international partners involved in the campaign "End Human Trafficking Now!"
13. Reconvening in two years to assess steps taken to implement this Declaration.

<sup>1</sup> The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.





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