



Intervention during UNGA High-Level Meeting on the
Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons
UN Headquarters
27th – 28th September 2017

Panel 2 discussion: 'The Global Plan of Action and effective partnership for the protection of and assistance to victims, including through the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, also taking in consideration the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.'

Your Excellency, thank you for the opportunity to make this intervention.

My name is Winifred Doherty, a member of the NGO Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons, and the NGO Representative for the **Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd**, a faith based organization, ensuring effective direct assistance in 73 countries. Every day we encounter the trauma, pain and disappointment of those who are promised a better life, opportunities, education or work, at home and abroad only to find themselves sold, into prostitution, and without access to justice.

Good Shepherd Sisters seeks to address root causes, examining and unmasking the links between trafficking and policies related to economic justice, violence against women, discrimination against the girl child, inadequate migration and refugee systems, **and the social acceptance of the prostitution of women and girls.** Genuine implementation of human rights-based policies is an antidote to victimization at the hands of traffickers.

Two central issues in the Political Declaration that are key in totally eliminating trafficking are the **recognition that women, girls and children are disproportionately affected, and the commitment to intensify efforts to eliminate DEMAND.**

The **underlying systemic causes of trafficking for sexual exploitation** are **misogyny, patriarchy, power imbalances and male privilege.** We stress that the

issues of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation cannot be relativized to other forms of trafficking. Mindsets that turn a blind eye to the links between human trafficking, the sex trade, gender-based violence, and cheap labour in favour of profit, sex, a good bargain or a human organ facilitate this exploitation permitting traffickers to become legitimate business people and sexually exploited girls and women to be commodified, instrumentalized and objectified. **Trafficking into prostitution must be addressed, and demand for prostitution as a root cause of trafficking must enter the dialogue.** An exploitative, consumerist economy is the antithesis of human rights and human dignity. We are all complicit, and we must all act to combat it in consistent and holistic ways.

A promising model is the **Optimal Life Course Conditions, authored by Dr. Angela Reed of the Mercy International Association.** This approach recognizes that the interplay between the personal life story and systemic oppression renders persons vulnerable to human trafficking, as witnessed by Grizelda Grootboom this morning. The model acknowledges cumulative disadvantage and addresses vulnerabilities across the life course, including the systemic causes of economic, social, and gender disparity and discrimination. The Optimal Life Course Conditions could be fully realized with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, eliminating vulnerabilities to traffickers and restoring dignity and hope to already-exploited persons.



Winifred Doherty
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