

THE NGO COMMITTEE TO STOP TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS HIGHLIGHTS THE ISSUE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING ON UN HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

In partnership with the Permanent Missions of the Philippines and Romania, the NGO CSTIP sponsored a panel, “The Human Rights Dimension in Trafficking in Persons” at UN Headquarters in New York on December 10th.

Moderator Jackie Shapiro, who represents ECPAT-USA (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking) and is a member of the Core leadership group of NGO CSTIP, opened the panel by remarking that although human rights are a cornerstone of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has become the model for efforts to extend human rights to everyone everywhere, there are, according to ILO estimates, 21 million people in the world are victims of human trafficking, enslaved as forced laborers, domestic workers, in sexually exploitation or as child soldiers-people deprived of their human rights and their dignity.

Ambassador Miculescu of Romania continued that there is nothing “human” about trafficking. She described the implementation of her country’s national plan to end trafficking, highlighting the role that NGOs have played in bringing to the forefront concerns about trafficking. Since 2012, Romania has issued an annual report on progress made in addressing human trafficking. They have instituted a campaign to raise awareness of both employers and employees about trafficking prevention.

Ambassador Natividad emphasized that the Philippines signing of international conventions and protocols that protect the rights of trafficking victims has been critical in implementing policies to extend laws and victim services. She described that the court system has initiated a “closed door” which make it safer and more comfortable for victims to testify and has resulted in increased convictions of perpetrators. She also mentioned that in her country there is a weekly radio show that warns listeners about how people can be lured into trafficking situations. The Philippines has put forward to the UN Third Committee this year a strong resolution on measures needed to address trafficking of women and girls.

Taina Bien-Aime, the Executive Director of the Coalition Against Trafficking of Women (CATW), described vividly several cases of victims of trafficking, giving an important “human face” to this grave violation of human rights. She spoke about the need to invest in survivors, including their value as a resource for developing more effective anti-trafficking strategies. Taina highlighted the Swedish model of punishing the pimps and johns, not the victims, as a best practice that has been successfully adopted by several European countries.

Kevin Cassidy from the ILO office at the United Nations said that the newly published estimate of global criminal annual profits of \$150 billion dollars is probably about 1/3 less than the reality. He reminded us that trafficking is an issue everywhere in the world, including in the United States. As 90% of victims are

exploited in the private economy, it is crucial to engage the private sector in efforts to end human trafficking. In June 2014 the International Labor Conference voted to adopt a new Protocol and Recommendation to supplement its 1930 Convention (No.29) to give new impetus to the global fight against forced labor. This will soon be available for Member States to sign.

The moderator concluded the panel with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon's 2014 message that human rights are not just to be commemorated on December 10th each year, but should be part of our lives 365 days a year!

Many thanks to Core Group member, Barbara Rochman, who represents the New York County Lawyers' Association, and the team at the Romanian Mission for putting this event together.