

INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL CONSULTATION ON  
MIGRATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING: MODERN SLAVERY?  
4-8 APRIL 2014  
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

**COMMUNIQUÉ**

Trafficking in Human Beings is a serious human rights violation. It is one of the most horrific results of the economic and social disparities that increase the vulnerability of millions of people. Migrants constitute the greater number of victims of trafficking. Such vast inequality allows many within our societies to be considered little more than disposable commodities.

We the participants of an international consultation on *Migration and Human Trafficking: Modern Slavery?*, organized by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches (CCIA /WCC) and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), hosted by the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCC SL) made up of representatives of churches and related ecumenical organisations from Africa, Asia, Arabian Gulf, Australia and Europe, met in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 4 - 8 April 2014 to discuss issues pertaining to migration and human trafficking. We have heard various testimonies and reports about the plight of trafficked migrants in different parts of the world, specifically shared by the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, from many situations in the world.

The consultation shared the work and experiences of churches in combating and eliminating this modern day slavery. We explored the dynamics and patterns of trafficking, sexual and labour exploitation, many times coupled with migration rendering unprecedented misery and agony. We heard stories from different countries and contexts such as human trafficking for organ thefts in the Sinai desert, forced labour and sex trafficking in Japan, human trafficking in Taiwan, the situation of migrant workers from the Philippines, construction workers in the Arabian Gulf, domestic migrant workers in India, child trafficking in Nigeria and the impact of human trafficking in women in Pakistan, sexual exploitation and trafficking in Thailand and the impact of human trafficking in Sri Lanka. We contemplated the role of churches, the significance of ecumenical advocacy at international fora against trafficking and sexual exploitation. We noted the fast-growing criminal industry as well as debt bondage.

Our experience is based on our work in accompanying the uprooted people and communities living in vulnerable situations. We oppose the corrupt practices and abuses of power against human beings that are inherent in trafficking. Realizing that migration is a reality in a globalized world, this fellowship is aimed at making migration consistent with human rights, and therefore ending any trafficking in persons. We have the responsibility, both individually and collectively, to work for the liberation of those who have been enslaved in this manner, and to advocate for effective legal and social mechanisms to combat human trafficking.

With our universal Church nearing Holy Week and Easter, we looked again at the Cross, seeing there the power of God's love. This is in such stark contrast to greed for power and wealth which exploit the vulnerable to suffer in "modern day slavery".

We are drawn to focus on and continue to trust the passionate love of Jesus Christ for all people and the way in which Christ identifies with and accompanies the vulnerable.

We recognize, as we listened, that Jesus' identification with the stranger is meant to be matched by ours in spirit and in practice. God's call to identify with the victims of human trafficking and their suffering makes us aware of our need for God's grace and for each other's prayerful support and action, requiring the need for strong ecumenical co-operation.

## **Affirmations and recommendations**

This consultation affirms that migration and human trafficking is a justice and peace issue. As we embark on the pilgrimage of justice and peace, the church is called to action against the evils associated with migration and human trafficking whereby people are enslaved, human dignity is degraded and in extreme cases fatality occurs. "Is not this the fast I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6).

We reiterate our commitment to

- a) *Stand* in solidarity with the victims of trafficking and to offer transformative actions, pastoral care and advocacy;
- b) *Sensitize* and create understanding among church members of the root causes and the magnitude of the problem;
- c) *Ensure* the protection, safety and human rights of migrant workers and their families;
- d) *Strengthen* existing networks and partnerships, form new alliances and collaborate with civil society and all other stakeholders including governments and UN agencies.

*We urge* the World Council of Churches, Regional Ecumenical Organizations, other Ecumenical Councils and related Organizations to give urgent priority to these issues through their programmes.