

# **Conclusions**

## **Latin American Meeting on New Slavery and Human Trafficking "Together against Trafficking in Persons"**

*Tuesday, 12 Feb 2019*

We want to thank all the organisations, institutions and individuals who work with dedication and commitment to eradicate human trafficking and to accompany victims and their families. Working together, with a clear framework, makes it possible to strive for a more human and just world.

### **Summary of Conclusions**

At the Latin American Meeting on New Slavery and Human Trafficking with the slogan "Together Against Human Trafficking" we gathered representatives from across the region – the Catholic Church, other religious communities, civil society and law enforcement – with Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, England, President of the Santa Marta Group – the organisation instituted by Pope Francis in 2014 to fight human trafficking and modern slavery.

Delegates attended Mass in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Buenos Aires on Friday 8 February, the Feast Day of St Josephine Bakhita - a day of prayer for all those affected by the crimes of modern slavery and human trafficking, and the people that volunteer and work to eradicate this crime.

We feel impelled by the Holy Spirit, with prophetic voice, to highlight, value and defend the dignity and rights of every human person, supported in the biblical tradition. Life is a gift from God that nobody has the right to take or injure – every life answers to the Will of the Creator.

We join with Pope Francis in saying:

"Even if we try to ignore it, slavery is not something of another time. In the face of this tragic reality we cannot wash our hands, but we don't want to be, in any way, accomplices to these crimes against humanity. We cannot ignore that there is slavery in the world, as much or more perhaps than before."

Every day we must strive to confront the evil of human trafficking - this scourge of humanity that currently affects 40 million people in the world, violating what is expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in various

international conventions. We must prevent this crime and rescue, assist, protect and serve the victims of modern slavery prevalent in all our communities.

**Our reflections have led us to assert the need:**

- to promote processes focused on the person and the defence of human dignity. The human person is at the centre of our work and our consciousness.
- for the Church and institutions attending the conference to promote initiatives between civil society, the various religious communities, law enforcement and government agencies to build confidence in all these institutions to eradicate this evil and help the victims. This commitment involves developing and sustaining practical cooperation on a shared vision.
- to encourage actions that accompany victims and allow them to collaborate with judicial proceedings without fear of consequences.
- to earmark more resources for the work to eradicate human trafficking and to press countries to have a specific budget for this purpose.
- to raise awareness in our communities so that we all open our eyes to the invisible reality of human trafficking – particularly the plight of the most vulnerable, including the migrant populations.
- to promote, at all levels of education, the dignity, equality and respect for every human person.
- to recognise that digital spaces and social networks are fertile ground for victim recruitment and to promote legislative and executive measures that prevent online exploitation.
- confiscate goods from those who profit from human trafficking and redirect these proceeds to assist victims. Whilst most countries have some form of legislation to tackle this, there is a need to implement it more effectively.
- to request a greater presence, in the member countries, of victim-centred services - efficient prevention, control and assistance agencies. Working towards more effective prosecution of the perpetrators of this evil organised crime.

In light of the disappearance of girls, boys and teenagers, especially for the purpose of sexual exploitation and organ harvesting, we call on the States to meet this reality with strong preventative measures. We also ask for effective and quick assistance for the victims' children.

- to promote the need for countries to avoid buying goods and services when supply chains include slave labour and to set up an obligatory audit system for the provision of goods.
- to promote the founding of specialised prosecutors' offices to combat human trafficking and swiftly bring perpetrators to justice.
- to strengthen the communications networks between institutions and organisations at diocesan, national and regional (Latin American) level, in order to build an effective network to share resources and to promote action.
- to initiate regional campaigns, focusing on promoting the value of the human person and raising awareness of the evil of human trafficking.

We entrust our work – and especially the victims and their families – to God, Father of Life. May the intercession of Mary, Mother of the poor and suffering, accompany us in all we do.

Buenos Aires, 11 February 2019  
*Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes*

**The Latin American Meeting on New Slavery and Human Trafficking "Together Against Human Trafficking"** was promoted by the Santa Marta Group, the Episcopal Conference of Argentina, through the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, the Episcopal Commission of Social Pastoral and the National Commission of Justice and Peace, along with the Latin American Episcopal Council - CELAM, through its Department of Justice and Solidarity, the Red Clamor and the International Forum of Catholic Action.