For immediate release

Press release

In Plain Sight: Conference on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

Caritas Social Action Network hosted a major Catholic Conference on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery on 15 October at CCLA in London.

The Conference entitled, In Plain Sight – Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery created the opportunity for 76 representatives from across the Church in England and Wales to share and reflect on experience in this field and to prepare new approaches and responses to what Pope Francis has called, “a scourge which continues to cause untold human suffering.”

Cardinal Vincent Nichols joined experts in the field on providing a wide range of local services, in policy for ethical investment and eradicating the phenomenon from supply chains, and discussions concluded with a call for new directions based on the good work of the Church.

There were contributions from the Santa Marta Group, Caritas Salford (parish initiatives) and from The Medaille Trust, JRS UK, Caritas Westminster’s Bakhita House and women@thewell (national perspectives and victim support). Andrew Adams (CCLA)and Sion Hall former Head of the East Lancashire Police Anti - Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery Unit addressed the issues or public engagement, partnership and eradication the phenomenon from supply chains & investments. The Arise Foundation spoke of the vital importance of partnership from the local to the international level, highlighting the enormous strengths the Church has to achieve this.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols thanked those who had made the Conference possible and said, “We need a detailed public account of the good work of the Catholic Church in this field and the agencies engaged in anti-trafficking need some clear and shared objectives.” He concluded by saying that the work of this conference was opening the door to the next phase.

The first UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland, now Senior Advisor to the Santa Marta Group of the Bishops Conference, spoke of the 150 million children today in positions of exploitation worldwide and approximately 20,000 children die every year though slavery, yet little action is taken against organisations that exploit children. Kevin starkly remarked, “Globally, 99.98% of human trafficking goes without prosecution so why wouldn’t a criminal do it if they will get away with it?” Kevin called for action at all levels.

Dr Philip McCarthy, Chief Executive Officer at CSAN said: “Catholic Dioceses, agencies and Religious Communities have been working for years to address this. In the UK alone there 140,000 people at any one time caught up in trafficking and modern-day slavery. The task is large but the links the Church has are extensive and will grow further to address this work. We shared our collective experience and our ideas for how we can make lasting impacts from the national to the community level, in practice and in policy.
Mark Wiggin, Director of Caritas Salford, said, “A key element will be building partnership with agencies, local people and with others with and without a faith background. By engaging Catholics and others of good will to work together and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will play our part in eradicating this scourge.”

CSAN were delighted to once again have the support as Conference sponsors and hosts of CCLA, which has £9 billion of assets under management. Its Ethical Investment Team has just launched a report on combating slavery in Ethical Investment and Andrew Adams said, “The inclusion of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery in the products that are part of our everyday lives means that practically everything we purchase has a direct or indirect connection to slavery. At the same time, CCLA will be working with other investors to develop strategies to help companies keep their supply chains clean.”

The Pastoral Orientation on Human Trafficking developed by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, will be the basis for the future development of this work within the Church. The Conference agreed the key effective action that the Church can adopt to contribute to the eradication of this growing problem and will discuss how to bring this about in practice to move from the words of the Conference to action at all levels.

ENDS

Notes for editors:

1. Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) is the social action agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. CSAN is a network of 45 charities that work across the field of social action including families and children, prisoners, elderly people, refugees, homeless people and people affected by Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. More information can be found at: www.csan.org.uk

2. Pastoral Orientation on Human Trafficking developed by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, will be the basis for the future development of this work within the Church.

3. Dr Anna Rowlands, St Hilda Associate Professor of Catholic Social Thought & Practice will prepare a follow-up paper on Modern Day Slavery and Catholic social thought.