

## Catholic Anti-Trafficking Forum Meeting: 8 July, 2022

The meeting was recorded and I assume that we will have full notes in time for the next one. The notes below are mine and my interpretation.

I counted 28 attending, but of the 15 dioceses who attended the October 2019 Conference I only noted Salford, Portsmouth and Birmingham. Most delegates were from organisations with a victim orientation. However, the importance of the Forum was highlighted by the presence of the usual key figures - Cardinal Nichols, Bishop William Kenny, David Ryall, Raymond Friel, Kevin Hyland, Linda Dearlove, and of course Arise representatives including Luke de Pulford. We now also have Peter Fahy, trustee of Salford Diocese and Caritas Salford who also chairs the recently formed Salford Diocese modern slavery group (name yet to be agreed).

Since October 2019 the emphasis has shifted away from a diocesan focus – the original Salford conception was largely diocesan – to a victim-orientated one. Much of the meeting was about the business model of modern slavery and national and international legislation.

**CSAN** has appointed a Migration Officer, Aliya Zahin, who has a wider role to include modern slavery and human trafficking.

The **SMG (UK)** will have a new website with improved communication.

At the **SMG meeting in Rome in May**, human trafficking was discussed in the context of mission and gospel. How can the Church work with law enforcement and legislative bodies? All agreed the need to ensure that policy and regulation were recognised by the UN and fed into other international bodies. There were some big players present including US Homeland Security and the Argentinian Police Chief.

Fr Odion spoke at length on the issue in of **organ harvesting** in Nigeria and the alarming rise in cases. We learned that Cardinal Bo also raised the issue in Rome <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2022-05/cardinal-bo-decries-human-trafficking-santa-marta-group.html> There has been a recent case of **organ harvesting** in the UK involving a boy trafficked to London by two Nigerians. The UK's Health and Care Bill has passed into law, a new piece of legislation that will prevent British nationals from traveling abroad to receive an organ transplant.

There are now 30,000 potential victims of human trafficking awaiting a decision on the **National Referral Mechanism** and the time to reach a decision has stretched from the original target of 45 days to an average of 392 days.

Peter Fahy spoke about our **Salford Diocese Modern Slavery Statement** and the model contract, which the Diocese will issue to all suppliers. He hopes it will take in parishes and schools. The Statement is a potential awareness-raising tool with a Catholic Social Teaching (CST) backcloth. Supply chains is a major issue in understanding and addressing the business model of modern slavery, with the US and Australia the major leaders in the field. Under a new EU draft law presented by the European Commission, firms will have to

do more checks on suppliers and there is the formal launch of the action plan in Brussels in September.

Sending migrants (including some who are potential victims of human trafficking) to **Rwanda** is another issue for us to fight. There are personal testimonies of people sent to Rwanda from other countries making their way back to Europe via Libya. A recent exercise across Europe, which resulted in many arrests and the seizure of a large number of boats and life jackets, demonstrates that tackling the organised crime business model is likely to be much more effective than targeting the migrants themselves.

Luke de Pulford outlined current **parliamentary bills** against which we should press for amendments via a unified approach, something that was lacking with the Nationality and Borders Bill, which passed almost without amendment. There has been a recent success in gaining an amendment to the Health and Care Act, which aims to eradicate slavery in the procurement of health equipment. Current bills for our attention are the Procurement Bill and the Online Safety Bill. We need to coordinate with others and learn from the Nationality and Borders bill experience where all efforts came to naught.

**The Declaration** (attached) for which I have been waiting with high hopes has finally been agreed, but as an informal document for an informal group and with no place for a signature. To use Cardinal Nichol's words, it can be summed up as: "... a common heart and a common aim, but no desire to be coordinated into some monster organization, but just to see each other, know each other, to discern what each other does and be stronger for it." I am very disappointed with this and can only assume that those amending Luke's original draft felt the commitment was too great for dioceses and organisations to agree to. None the less, I feel that our Diocese should take the lead in making the Declaration a formal commitment for us. I think it is for Salford Diocese, still very much a presence and an influence, to bring back the diocesan perspective, which is essentially about awareness and action in the spirit of Formation and CTS, a point actually made by Linda Dearlove talking about the recent Santa Marta Group (SMG) event in Rome.

In the spirit of **partnership working**, we have already shared our Modern Slavery Statement on the University of Nottingham's Human Rights Lab, Anti-Slavery Partnership Toolkit. It has been placed under "Faith Engagement" under "involving communities"  
<https://iasctoolkit.nottingham.ac.uk/assets/involving-communities/>

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