TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS: TEN YEARS OF PARTNERING TO COMBAT MODERN SLAVERY

"The victims of modern slavery have many faces. They are men and women, adults and children. Yet, all are denied basic human dignity and freedom. … All too often suffering from horrible physical and sexual abuse, it is hard for them to imagine that there might be a place of refuge."

— President Barack Obama

The 2010 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, compiled by the U.S. Department of State, marks the 10th anniversary of progress and challenge in the fight against modern slavery. In 2000, the United States enacted the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), and the United Nations adopted the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children – also known as the Palermo Protocol.

The Palermo Protocol

The Palermo Protocol focused the global community's attention on the scourge of human trafficking and the need for nations to work together to combat it. For the first time, there was a global consensus that all acts of trafficking in persons should be criminalized, including trafficking for forced labor, slavery, and slavery-like practices. The Protocol held that governmental responses should incorporate the "3P" paradigm: Prevention, Criminal Prosecution and Victim Protection.

A Growing and Committed but Young Movement

Over 10 years, governments worldwide have made appreciable progress in understanding some basic realities about human trafficking:

- People are in situations of modern slavery in most countries.
- Trafficking is a fluid phenomenon responding to market demands, vulnerabilities in laws, weak penalties, and economic instability.
- Trafficking can occur without movement across borders.

But 10 years of focused effort to combat trafficking only represents the infancy of this modern movement. Many countries are still learning about human trafficking and the best responses to it. It is not enough to prosecute traffickers if governments do not provide assistance to the survivors and work to ensure that no one else is victimized. No country has yet attained a truly comprehensive response to this massive, ever increasing, ever changing crime.

The Victims

More people are trafficked for forced labor than for commercial sex. The crime is less about duping and kidnapping people than it is about coercion of people who entered a form of service voluntarily or migrated willingly. Men comprise a significant number of trafficking victims. Traffickers often use sexual violence as a weapon against women to keep them in compelled service, whether in a field, a factory, a brothel, a home, or a war zone.

Key Numbers from the 2010 TIP Report

- 12.3 million adults and children in forced labor, bonded labor, and forced prostitution around the world; 56 percent of these victims are women and girls
- $32 billion annual trade for the traffickers
- 49,105 victims identified worldwide, a 59 percent increase over the last reporting year (2008)
- Prevalence of trafficking victims in the world: 1.8 per 1,000 inhabitants (in Asia and the Pacific: 3 per 1,000)
- 4,166 successful trafficking prosecutions in 2009, a 40 percent increase over 2008
- Countries that have yet to convict a trafficker under laws in compliance with the Palermo Protocol: 62
- Countries without laws, policies, or regulations to prevent victims' deportation: 104
- 23 countries received upgraded rankings in the 2010 TIP Report; 19 countries received downgraded rankings
- Two countries, the United States and Kiribati, are ranked for the first time in the 2010 TIP Report