



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Multi-Sectoral Partnerships to Combat Human Trafficking

September 13, 2017

2:00 – 3:30 PM

2255 Rayburn House Office Building

Opening Remarks as prepared for delivery

Good afternoon and welcome to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's hearing on how to strengthen multi-sectoral partnerships in the fight against human trafficking. I would like to thank our distinguished experts for taking time out of their busy schedules and important work to testify before the Commission on this topic today.

Trafficking in persons, or human trafficking, refers to the subjection of men, women, and children to compelled service for the purposes of exploitation. It is an issue that deeply concerns me and one in which I have been vigorously engaged since coming to Congress in efforts to work for lasting solutions.

Trafficking occurs domestically within the territorial borders of a country, including in the United States, and it is also a cross-border and transnational phenomenon. Examples of human trafficking include: trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, including child sexual exploitation; forced labor, including bonded labor, involuntary domestic servitude, and forced child labor; and the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Reports suggest that human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world, holding captive an estimated 21 million victims and contributing to a multi-billion-dollar criminal industry. It is a centuries-old problem that, despite international efforts, continues to occur in virtually every country in the world.

My efforts have largely, but not exclusively, been directed at ending sex trafficking, with a specific focus on the demand for commercial sex.

Evidence shows that where the demand for commercial sex flourishes, so does a thriving human trafficking industry. This is why I introduced H.R. 466, the Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Act. This legislation holds nations accountable for serious and sustained efforts to fight human trafficking by compelling them to include measures to combat the demand for commercial sex as well.

Since the Palermo Protocol in 2000, governmental, non-profit, and private sector initiatives have made important strides against the global epidemic of human trafficking, but closer partnerships across these sectors are needed to increase their effectiveness. Different types of human rights abuses are manifested in the various forms of trafficking, and different sectors address these through complementary approaches.

The 3P paradigm of “preventing the crime, protecting victims, and prosecuting traffickers” is a multi-pronged strategy implemented by sectors in different ways depending on the context in which each operates. Greater communication, coordination and information-sharing among governments, businesses and NGOs working to combat trafficking will serve the best interests of those trapped in this nefarious enterprise. My hope is that this hearing will help to facilitate that.

Each of our experts here today are working across sectors with other anti-trafficking organizations and initiatives to end this violent form of modern slavery. I look forward to hearing how each sector is working together with the others to end trafficking, and what more they need from each other to creatively strengthen their own unique anti-trafficking work and arrive at workable and permanent solutions. I am also very interested to learn how Congress can better help facilitate this kind of cross-sectoral cooperation.

Though we are all working to combat trafficking within our different contexts, our goals are the same, and we must continue to increase our cooperation, collective effectiveness, and collaborative efforts in order to achieve lasting success.

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