

**Human Trafficking: International and National Implications**  
**Opening Statement of Ambassador-at-Large Luis CdeBaca**  
**to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**  
**(As Prepared)**  
**March 25, 2010**

Good morning and thank you Co-Chairman McGovern and Co-Chairman Wolf for holding this hearing today on such a far-reaching and important issue: human trafficking.

I am pleased today to provide an update to the Commission on the Obama Administration's global efforts against modern slavery and I look forward to fielding your questions.

Today is the International Day to Remember the Victims of Slavery and the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade. And yet, in this day and age, in the year 2010, we are still combating a phenomenon that has plagued cultures, communities, and countries since the beginning of time. Ten years have passed since the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was signed into law by President Clinton. It has also been a decade since the United Nations negotiated the Palermo Protocol, which clearly defines human trafficking on the international stage, and has been adopted by 137 countries.

Thousands of victims have been helped; thousands of traffickers have been arrested and prosecuted; neither of which would have come about without the legal and policy achievements of the last decade.

The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons is working hard to ensure that the policy and legal achievements of the last 10 years are turned into actual results: freeing more people from the shackles of modern slavery and preventing this human rights abuse in the first place.

Today we are seeing more incidences of human trafficking than ever before for a myriad of reasons, including greater public awareness and more cooperation between government, non-governmental organizations, and law enforcement. The spike in these numbers reflects trends that we saw in the wake of the domestic violence movement and the hate crimes movement – as awareness increases, more cases are brought to light. Yet, we must be honest in this assessment as well; there are still thousands, if not millions, of cases not reported due to the dark and shadowy nature of this crime. As old as the practice of slavery may be, the criminals that bind these people's hopes by force, fraud, and coercion are looking for new ways to commit these crimes. We are looking for new ways to apprehend them.

The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons is partnering with more non-governmental organizations than ever before by funding and supporting on-the-ground anti-trafficking efforts. Even with the \$20 million in annual funds dedicated to these efforts, we are only able to fund a fraction of the requests we receive, as nearly \$289 million was requested in Fiscal Year 2010. There are more requests, more worthy efforts, and more victims that we need to help. Today, I humbly ask for your help and support so that we may continue to make progress against modern slavery.

In the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake, the Office was able to act swiftly and expedite monies to fund efforts to improve child protection and lower the risk of exploitation during this natural disaster. The Office was already engaged in anti-trafficking efforts in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic prior to the earthquake and now we are looking at ways to build on and improve those programs. The earthquake in Haiti also highlighted an important notion: anti-trafficking efforts must be implemented in every disaster-response plan – both international and domestic – to ensure that men, women, and children are not preyed upon and exploited. Your help and support in Congress to ensure these standards is vital to ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable populations in a time of crisis.

In addition to the Office's programmatic efforts, we are also working to combat modern slavery through the annual Trafficking in Persons Report, as required by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

In February, the Office released its 2010 interim assessment, which as directed by law, is a semi-annual update on those countries who received a Tier Two Watch List ranking in the 2009 Trafficking in Persons Report or who moved up a tier from the 2008 to the 2009 Report. I offer the tier ranking definitions for your information as well as the 2010 interim assessment. The semi-annual assessment is an opportunity to look at the progress made by those countries as well as gauge the work still remaining. The majority of the 55 countries covered in this assessment showed some progress since the release of the 2009 Trafficking in Persons Report – an overall positive trend. Fifteen of these countries, however, have shown minimal or negligible progress since June 2009 and it is these countries that bear close analysis. It is important to note that the Office is currently compiling the reporting for the 2010 Trafficking in Persons Report, which is slated to be released in June. The Office will be happy to update the Commission on its contents as we near the release.

Countries included in the interim assessment, which as I stated are based on the previous year's rankings, range in their ability to combat trafficking in persons. We see some countries, which have access to vast resources, stagnate in their efforts to combat human trafficking while others with few resources make impressive gains against this terrible crime. The Department of State is committed to strengthening our partnerships to combat trafficking in persons with all nations who wish to work with us on this issue. It is clear that political will is the necessary element to make tangible progress against this global scourge.

And, it will take political will here in the United States to improve our efforts against human trafficking. In the last year, we have seen a 'whole of government' commitment under the Obama Administration in tackling this scourge. Under the leadership of Secretary Clinton, the Office will rank the United States for the first time in the 2010 Trafficking in Persons report. This reporting will be based on the same minimum standards outlined in the TVPA and by which we rank foreign countries. We must acknowledge to foreign governments that human trafficking exists everywhere, including the United States. As chair of the Senior Policy Operating Group, which coordinates the Obama Administration's 'whole of government approach' to anti-trafficking efforts and policy, it is necessary to note the interagency cooperation in reporting for the U.S. ranking. As Secretary Clinton rightly said, "Human rights are universal, but their

experience is local. This is why we are committed to holding everyone to the same standard, including ourselves.”

Including the United States in the 2010 Trafficking in Persons report is not the only major initiative undertaken by the Office this year. Partnering with the United States’ Office of the Chief of Protocol we have made marked improvements to ensure that domestic workers for diplomatic personnel are properly paid, safeguarded from exploitation, and are fully aware of their rights while in the United States. The Office is also working on a key preventive effort with partners in the business community to rid product supply chains of modern slavery. It is essential to our overall efforts to ensure that we reach the root causes and tracing these supply lines are key components to lowering the incidence of worker exploitation.

Today, I have shared information on the Obama Administration’s global efforts on a host of levels. As evidenced by our work in Haiti, with the interim assessment and annual report, the first-ever U.S. ranking, improved domestic worker safeguards, and supply chain efforts it is quite clear that human trafficking has cross-cutting implications. It affects our agricultural, economic, trade, security, domestic, and foreign policies to name a few.

Yet, the greatest implication is the human one. It is through the example of people like Tom Lantos, who so bravely pursued the path to freedom during the Holocaust, and turned his victim status into survivor status through his life’s work. His story is the story of human trafficking victims today – it is through bravery, courage, and hope that these victims become survivors and live a life built on freedom.

His example is in keeping with what the President called us to do in January: to “acknowledge that forms of slavery still exist in the modern era, and ... recommit ourselves to stopping the human traffickers who ply this horrific trade.”

Thank you again for holding this hearing today. The Department looks forward to working with you and I welcome your questions.

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