



BUILDING BRIDGES OF FREEDOM

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TO END MODERN DAY SLAVERY

A Conference sponsored by the American Embassy to the Holy See; Rome, Italy —By David Schilling, ICCR

The *Building Bridges of Freedom* conference brought together religious leaders, diplomats, academics, government officials, corporate and civil society representatives to address the reality of modern day slavery.

Ambassador Luis CdeBaca of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Office of the US State Department set the tone in his keynote message: “A decade into this modern movement, it seems safe to say that trafficking



Ambassador Luis CdeBaca

in persons is a pretty misleading term. It implies that this is a crime of movement, when in fact this is a crime of exploitation. It is about compelling a person, whether through force or fraud or coercion, to suffer in servitude or prostitution.....**What we 're talking about is a modern form of slavery**, and all the terminology that swirls around this unfortunate modern reality only

serves to euphemize the fact that today there are by low estimates twelve and a half million, and by high estimates twenty-seven million men, women, and children living in a state of modern day slavery.”

(www.state.gov/g/tip)

To address this “crime of exploitation” three panels explored the importance of public/private partnerships and the role of faith-based organizations, corporations and civil society in the struggle to end modern day slavery. Sister Estrella Castalone, coordinator of the Talitha Kum Network of the International Union of Superiors General, a



Ambassador Miguel Humberto Diaz, U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See

global network of women religious based in Rome, spoke eloquently about the importance of multi-sector partnerships: “ **The phenomenon of trafficking is highly complex** and covers multiple aspects. The actions to counter it, therefore, need to cover equally multiple dimensions. It calls for the involvement of many religious congregations working in partnership with the different sectors of society.” Sister Estrella is eager to collaborate with ICCR members in strengthening the global movement to eradicate slavery.



Sr Estrella Castalone

Deborah Cundy, Vice President, Office of the Chairman, Carlson Companies, described Carlson 's journey to confront modern day slavery in the form of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and women.



Dr. Rosa Pati, St. Thomas University School of Law, panel moderator

Ms. Cundy said, “ I n the corporate world we say, ‘ **What gets measured gets done.** ’ It is hard to put metrics around human trafficking since it is an underground activity. But we know it is the fastest growing illicit activity today. ” Carlson has been a leader in the hotel and tourism industry by endorsing and implementing the ECPAT code

(www.thecode.org) which includes on-going training of hotel staff on detecting potential trafficked victims.

The civil society panelists underscored a number of key issues: building the capacity of civil society organizations to hold states accountable (UN Office on Drugs and Crime) ; addressing the growing crisis of domestic servitude (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women) and the importance of increased transparency to eradicate modern day slavery in global supply chains (Barry Broad, Broad and Gusman, who was instrumental in the passage of the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act of 2010).



Rev. David Schilling, Program Director, Human Rights and Resources, ICCR

I presented ICCR members ' work on child sex tourism, modern day slavery in supply chains and challenged corporations to exert leadership, quoting ICCR 's Investor Statement (released at the conference): “ Because human trafficking is so egregious and pervasive, **companies need to go beyond individual initiatives** to partner with other industry leaders and non-governmental organizations in multi-stakeholder initiatives and public-private partnerships that are actively confronting this issue. ”

Many in the audience were hearing about ICCR 's corporate engagement strategies for the first time. Since the “ Building Bridges Conference, ” we have heard from a number of organizations—from Italy, Nigeria, Benin, UK and the US—who are eager to collaborate with ICCR, a very good sign!

