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Press Conference to present the World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking

Intervention of Fr. Michael Czerny, S.J.

Intervention of Rev. Fr. Frédéric Fornos, S.J.

Intervention of Sr. Gabriella Bottani, S.M.C.

At 11.30 this morning, in the Holy See Press Office, a press conference was held to present the World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, promoted by the International Union of Superiors General (UISG/USG), held every year on 8 January, feast day of Saint Josephine Bakhita. The theme this year is "Together against human trafficking".

The panel was composed of: Fr. Michael Czerny, S.J., under-secretary for the Section of Migrants and Refugees of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; Fr. Frédéric Fornos, S.J., international director of the Pope's Prayer Network; and Sr. Gabriella Bottani, S.M.C., international coordinator of *Talitha Kum*.

In addition, the conference was attended by some survivors; Sr. Carmen Ugarte, O.S.R., and Mary Adeline Abamo, S.D.S., two religious sisters active in the field; Fr. Bruno Ciceri, official of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and director of the International Apostleship of the Sea.

The following are the interventions by the speakers:

Intervention of Fr. Michael Czerny, S.J.

World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking

On this World Day of Prayer and Awareness, the Vatican's new *Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking*¹ help us

- To see more clearly: Why does the depravity of human trafficking persist in the 21st century? Is it simply that trafficking and slavery are very profitable?
- To understand more deeply: How does the ugly, evil business of human trafficking operate? It stays hidden and invisible, but it functions nearly everywhere, like corruption. The State must protect its citizens and residents from entrapment and slavery. Yet there isn't much effort to prosecute and punish.
- To respond here and now, and to commit long-term: What can you and I do to alleviate and eliminate human trafficking?

The witnesses will describe unimaginable deception, coercion and suffering. Their testimony shows concretely what can be stolen from a human life for the pleasure and profit of others. It is inconceivable until you hear a victim, a survivor tell you how it happened to him or her.

At the heart of each victim's story is the inviolable, sacred dignity of every human person, and at the heart of each survivor's liberation is the solidarity of others.

The first to offer solidarity have been and are the Sisters, working quietly and quietly networking, and their worldwide network is here, *Talitha Kum*.²

Solidarity is also in the video *Human Trafficking*, vividly expressing the great concern of the Church, of millions praying around the world.³

We join in praying

Dear Saint Josephine Bakhita, help those blinded by greed and lust who trample the human rights and dignity of their brothers and sisters. Help them to break out of their hateful chains and to become fully human again.

Dear Saint Josephine Bakhita, help us when we feel tempted to look away and not to help, to reject others or even to abuse them.

O Loving God, let your merciful light flood into the darkest shadows. Bring salvation to the innocents who suffer under sinful abuse. Bring conversion to the utterly lost souls who hold them captive and exploit them.

¹ The *Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking* can be found at <https://migrants-refugees.va/trafficking-slavery/> in various languages and formats.

² <https://www.talithakum.info/>, preghieracontrotratta@gmail.com

³ For more information, <https://www.popesprayer.va/>

Intervention of Rev. Fr. Frédéric Fornos, S.J.

Campaign against human trafficking The Pope's video, February

Pope Francis is strongly committed to the fight against this scourge in its different expressions. Recently, in his Angelus on 20 January, he prayed for the victims of human traffickers, and also, for those responsible, allowing

silence to highlight this.

It is a drama that has been in the heart and in prayer for a long time. You will remember the return flight from Ireland in July 2018. He spoke about human trafficking, organized by unscrupulous traffickers, with all his horror. He had already asked us to organize this month of prayer, but just after this trip, during a meeting, he insistently asked that his World Prayer Network truly pray for the men, women and children who live in these situations of slavery. Faced with this human tragedy, faced with so much suffering, helplessness and anguish of men, women and children who are victims of human trafficking and slavery, often in the context of migration, it is a cry that comes from the heart, it is the cry of prayer to the Lord. For Francis they are not numbers, they are names, faces, concrete stories, they are our brothers and sisters in humanity. We can not be silent if we do not wish to sell our soul to the devil. This is why we are here. For this reason we have prepared with the Holy Father his monthly video on this drama (www.ilvideodelpapa.org). Listen to the Pope's strong words in this video: "Faced with this tragic reality, no one can wash his hands of it he does not want to be, in some way, an accomplice to this crime against humanity".

As indicated at point 21 of the document, presented in the "Migrants and Refugees" section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development at the end of January, "Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking", it is important to work on diffusion campaigns, at national and international level. It is important to denounce. And in this task, the Pope's Prayer Network is active, in collaboration with those who are seated here, with this video of the month of February. This tragedy cannot be ignored; let us ask, please, to make it known to everyone. However, it is not enough to denounce our complicity, and for this reason there is also a prayer intention of the Pope: "Let us pray for a generous welcome to the victims of human trafficking, enforced prostitution, and violence".

The video may be viewed at: www.ilvideodelpapa.org

Intervention of Sr. Gabriella Bottani, S.M.C.

Talitha Kum: 10 years against the trafficking of new slaves

«To celebrate the World Day of prayer against trafficking is above all the commitment to lighting a lamp for freedom, against every form of slavery»

This year too there arrives the appointment of 8 February, memorial of Saint Josephine Bakhita, in which the World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking is held. A day that this time unites an important milestone for *Talitha Kum*, the international network of men and women religious created in 2009 by the UISG (International Union of Superiors General), promoter of the Day. Indeed, *Talitha Kum* is celebrating ten years of activity in countering human trafficking throughout the five continents.

A long road that has led to great results. Today the network is engaged in activities of prevention, raising awareness, protection, partnership and prayer in 77 countries on 5 continents: 13 in Africa, 13 in Asia, 17 in America, 31 in Europe, 2 in Oceania. In the 34 countries where there are no national networks, the regional or continental co-ordinations have contact groups or people.

There are 34 courses created for the establishment of networks, for a total of 136 days of training, plus a pilot course for the training of 22 leaders of *Talitha Kum* for collaborative actions against trafficking. There are more than 1,000 religious sisters trained in 65 countries, and over 2,000 participants in nun-led networks are involved in the fight against trafficking at different levels.

There are 150 operational groups in the world of *Talitha Kum* networks. In addition to the national groups, there are the sub-groups that have been communicated by 17 national networks, about 40% of the total networks. This figure demonstrates the ability to structure and spread the network throughout the country. It is no

coincidence that the name chosen for this year's World Day is "Together against trafficking": it is only through joint work that it is possible to respond to the challenge of trafficking, to promote and strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the parties involved, and to fight those who exploit the "dream" of thousands of people trying to improve their living conditions.

The 10-year anniversary of *Talitha Kum* is a time of grace for consecrated life committed against trafficking, in which we are called to thank God for the journey made, to affirm our commitment and joint action and to look with courage and confidence at our present and the future, to understand the complexity of the phenomenon in this difficult time, where everything is in motion and human rights are less and less protected.

A major commitment by the *Talitha Kum* International Office in Rome is lobbying and advocacy work in collaboration with other entities: such as Vatican Dicasteries and religious organizations at the United Nations.

Recognizing the progress made, verifying our commitment and planning the future are the steps that *Talitha Kum* will make during the network's first General Assembly from 22 to 28 September, where more than 90 nuns engaged in the world against the trafficking of persons will meet.
