



Background Paper

Committee: Human Rights

Topic B: Improving labor conditions to avoid modern slavery

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Slavery is defined as the condition of being legally owned by someone else, or the system in which some people are owned by others. Slavery can be traced back roughly 11,000 years and sadly continues to affect people up to the present day. Whether they are women forced into prostitution, men forced to work in agriculture or construction, children in sweatshops, or girls forced to marry older men, their lives are controlled by their exploiters, they no longer have a free choice, and they have to do as they are commanded. You know someone is a slave when they are forced to work. Through coercion, mental or physical threat, being trapped and controlled by an 'employer' through mental or physical abuse, or the threat of abuse, they are dehumanised. They are treated as a commodity by being bought and sold as 'property,' or being physically constrained with restrictions placed on their freedom of movement.

One of the objectives of this committee is to abolish modern slavery by proposing solutions to this worldwide problem. In the USA, there are more than 400,000 people who are working in slave like conditions. They are working in bad conditions, and being forced to do things they do not want to do. An example of this problem is the seafood industry in Thailand, where a boat can be on the ocean months without seeing the coast. If the workers try to escape, they die. Another example is sexual slavery, when women or girls are forced or blackmailed to serve men. The majority of these victims end up dead. Another clear example of this are the private companies that have people working extensive hours with the minimum salary and in bad conditions. In some countries like the USA, Spain or the UK, people are holding strikes to demand their government's attention concerning this problem.

Countries that are worried about this problem are in an organization called Anti-Slavery International, which has been working to end slavery for over 180 years. They are the world's oldest human rights organisation. The organisation works across geographic areas where slavery is present. They investigate and expose current cases of slavery, identify the best ways to stop these abuses, and influence policymakers to take action. They support victims of slavery in their struggle for freedom. They work in more than 20 countries, directly supporting over 115,200 people affected by slavery to claim their rights and take control of their lives. They currently have projects in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, and the UK to solve this problem. Urmila Bhoola, one of four mandate holders to address the committee, said "gender inequalities and discrimination are the primary drivers of

slavery for women and girls. Stereotypes surrounding suitable forms of employment for women also perpetuate conditions leading to their exploitation. For example, women are overrepresented in the care economy, and in accommodation and food services, while men and boys working in construction, fishing and manufacturing are especially vulnerable.” Because most forms of slavery occur in the private sector, she said it is imperative that businesses comply with the United Nations ‘Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. More research into the specific experiences of men and women is needed, as well as efforts which ensure that legislation recognizes the gendered impacts of slavery. Furthermore, tailored laws can highlight the fact that women are not a homogeneous group. The UN is trying to combat this problem by suggesting that countries promote gender equality and improve labor conditions.

In conclusion, this topic is about how to combat modern slavery in all the countries affected, and give solutions to improve labor conditions to try to eliminate this problem. Delegates should make emphasis in the debate about what countries are doing to solve this problem, and how to get the support of organizations that deal with modern slavery.

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