

Revealing the Child Faces of Modern Slavery

Expert Panel on the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

2 December 2016, 11 a.m., Salle XXIII, Palais des Nations



Background

The **United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery** will host an Expert Panel Discussion to mark the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery on 2 December 2016, in Geneva. The Panel will focus on the specific needs and the rehabilitation of children victims of modern slavery practices.

Today, an estimated 21 million people worldwide are trapped in conditions of contemporary slavery, with over one-quarter of those affected being children.¹ Slavery is thus not only a memory of the past, but also a cruel reality of modern times that affects the most vulnerable members of our society and precludes them from a life of freedom and dignity.

Children are especially susceptible to becoming victims of modern slavery, including domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, forced child begging, trafficking, early marriage, forced recruitment of child soldiers, and employment in hazardous conditions. Children are entitled to specific rights, and States have the obligation to take steps to eradicate modern slavery and to protect the rights of children.

Progress has been made in the care, rehabilitation, and reintegration of child victims of modern slavery. However, millions of children remain in conditions of slavery, and an ever-increasing

¹ ILO: *ILO global estimate of forced labour: Results and methodology* (Geneva, 2012).

number of children are being pushed into modern slavery as a result of extreme poverty, deeply anchored discriminatory beliefs and patterns, as well as conflicts. Much still needs to be done.

The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery is uniquely mandated to reach out to victims of modern slavery, including children. It channels funding to NGOs, often working at the grass-roots level, that are specialized in the provision of assistance and rehabilitation to victims. The Fund contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Goal #8.7 to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labour, especially the worst forms of child labour.

In 2016, the Fund awarded a total of US\$ 580,100 to 42 organizations around the world for the provision of direct assistance to tens of thousands of freed victims of modern slavery. More than a third of these victims are children. The Fund applies a victim-centred approach, focusing on redress and rehabilitation, empowerment and reintegration of victims.

Objectives

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Fund and the UN International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, on 2 December 2016, the UN Slavery Fund will convene an expert panel to highlight the modern-day reality of slavery (11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Salle XXIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva).

The event will be open to all Permanent Missions, civil society actors, rehabilitation practitioners and media.

The **Expert Panel** will:

- draw attention to the seriousness and extent of modern-day slavery, in particular its dehumanizing impact on children, and emphasize the need for action;
- share the experiences of grantees of the UN Slavery Fund in the rehabilitation and empowerment of victims as vital components in the fight to eradicate modern slavery;
- put forward the voices of former victims of child slavery.

The Expert Panel will be followed by an inter-active segment of questions and answers.

Interpretation in English, French and Spanish will be provided.

Panellists

- Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Ms. Nevena Vučković-Šahović, Chairperson of the UN Slavery Fund
- Ms. Urmila Bhoola, UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery

- Mr. James Kofi Annan, Challenging Heights, Ghana
- Ms. Loretta Bondi, BeFree Social Cooperative, Italy
- Ms. Katy Robjant, Vivo International, Germany
- Mr. Ashif Sheikh, Jan Sahas Social Development Society, India
- Ms. Mary Read, International Labour Organization
