

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

HUMAN TRAFFICKING WITHIN AND FROM AFRICA

Co-organised by **Caritas Internationalis** and the **Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People**

DRAFT AGENDA

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Trafficking in the maritime world

State of affairs:

The maritime world is a globalized one. Commercial shipping transports 90% of the goods produced in the world by loading it on thousands of vessels that criss-cross every possible ocean, sea or river. These vessels are managed by a workforce of 1.2 million seafarers of all races, nationalities and religions. In 2010, the fisheries sector (including aquaculture) provided livelihoods and income for an estimated 54.8 million people, with an estimated number of about 4.36 million fishing vessels (according to FAO statistics).

The maritime industry is governed by a system, called the Flag of Convenience (FOC), which makes it very difficult to clearly identify who is the real owner, because of the number of interested parties involved (charterers, manning agencies, insurers and owners of the cargo, etc.). Work in the maritime sector is often characterized by inadequate salaries, difficult work conditions, violation of human and labor rights, forced labor and trafficking. A large number of people employed as seafarers or fishers are vulnerable and potential victims of trafficking. This is because their work makes them invisible to the society where they come from, and they are not known in the foreign ports where the vessel arrives.

The problem of trafficking for forced labor is more pronounced in the fishing sector. This is true for a number of reasons. Among them, fishing vessels can stay out at sea for long periods of time (from a few months to several years), and the exploited crews of these fishing vessels find it difficult, if not impossible, to report their predicaments.

Many internal/transnational migrants are more easily subjected to trafficking for forced labor into the fishing industry because they generally come from poor and undeveloped areas of the countries; they have received very little education or not at all; or they are unaware of the working conditions on board fishing vessels. The strongest push factors are extreme poverty and unemployment in their countries of origin. These people

easily fall prey of brokers and/or members organized crime who, by promising a job and a good salary, transport them across borders of nations and on board fishing vessels in the middle of the sea. These people, without any personal document, find themselves in an irregular situation because they entered illegally in a country; they are often afraid to seek help from the local authorities because these themselves are corrupted and often conspire with the traffickers.

Though trafficking for forced labor in the fishing sector, as previously mentioned, is not limited only to developing countries (such as in Southeast Asia, Africa, i.e. 74 Indonesian fishers victims of trafficking and stranded in Cape Town, children in Ghana employed on fishing in Lake Victoria), but is present and documented also in countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Norway, New Zealand and Latin America.

What are the current challenges both for both faith-based organizations and the international community?

The phenomenon of trafficking and forced labor within the maritime industry is not recent, however, it is unfortunately unknown among the general society. The main challenge is to increase awareness about the issue and get more people to understand the problem of human trafficking and forced labor in the fishing sector.

At the level of prevention, there is a need to enhance legislations that will strengthen the control of fishing vessels; that will educate people; that will prevent trafficking by providing viable alternatives of livelihood.

At the level of protection, it is necessary to identify, rescue and provide long term financial and psychological support to victims, in order to prevent the recurrence of them re-entering the same circle of exploitation.

At the level of persecution, it is necessary to convince victims to bring the cases to court and to obtain sufficient evidence for a trial and for conviction of the trafficker.

Who are the stockholders working on the issue, and what are they doing (on national, regional, and international levels)?

The main stockholders working on the issues are:

- Faith-based organizations (Apostleship of the Sea, International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA), which usually work through chaplains and volunteers around the world, intervening in cases of emergency by providing material and spiritual welfare to victims. The work done strengthens and develops the cooperation and collaboration, through the exchange of information and the development of a global network capable of intervening in different countries.
- Several UN organizations (ILO, UNDOC, INTERPOL, IOM, etc.), which have – in recent years – shown increased interest regarding the issue, because there are related concerns such as criminal activities at sea, labor violations, etc. Since then, they have been working to strengthen the legal and institutional framework in order to address the root causes.

- Also some NGO's whose general interest are environmental issues have started showing attention to the plights of fishers, and denounce cases of trafficking, forced labor and abuses.
- Prominent seafood retailers have heard mass media reports on the situation of fishers, and have intervened, however, only to protect their image in front of consumers.
- Mass media and reporters are interested more in "the story" than the issue of the situation of fishers in general. Though some reports are very well done and well-researched, having helped to "open the eyes" of the people on this hidden reality, it is unfortunate that this effect did not lasted long.

What are the results of the actions implemented and the changes obtained by faith-based organizations?

Since the number of faith-based organizations involved in the fight against maritime trafficking remains, as of today, very small, the effects of their actions are also limited.

- faith-based organizations were the first to bring out into the open the vast and unknown problem of trafficking and forced labor in the maritime industry. Now, more and more, people and organizations are becoming aware of the problem and its complexity, and would like to get involved and to work for a solution.
- To Governments and international organizations, faith-based organizations are considered important partners in fighting trafficking and forced labor in the maritime world.

What would be your recommendations (to Caritas and Bishops' Conferences, religious congregations, other faith-based actors, Governments, regional bodies) for the implementation of the respective SDG'S, etc.? Please come up with three and specify to whom they are directed.

- I would recommend requesting from Bishops' Conferences (especially the ones whose territory borders with the sea) to put into practice the Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio, Stella Maris*, of Pope John Paul II and to pay special attention to the pastoral care of the people of the sea.
- I would recommend demanding from Governments, through the proper authorities (such as Flag States, Port Authorities, Coast Guard, etc.) to increase inspections on fishing vessels when in port and to strictly implement existing International Regulations and Conventions on human and labor rights of fishers.
- I would recommend that, as Church, we partner with other maritime NGO's in being the voice of fishers by reporting to National Governments and International Institutions (such as the ILO/IMO/FAO) their concerns and aspirations; and by lobbying for the ratification of the *ILO Work in Fishing Convention 188*, and *Recommendation 199*, which address matters such as the minimum age for work on a fishing vessel, medical standards, work agreements, occupational safety & health, and social security.

- I would recommend that, as Church, we demand from seafood companies to identify and choose suppliers which have declarations that clearly state that they are free from forced labor and human trafficking. Such declarations would have to be part of their contracts and adhere to international guidelines/policies.

What questions would you like to address during the Conference?

What do you know about maritime trafficking?

What does your organization have to offer in terms of people, structures, programmes in the combatting and eradication of maritime trafficking in your area?

Can you suggest a good practice (briefly describe it)

The Apostleship of the Sea (AOS), with its network of 350 Centres around the world, is a beacon of hope for seafarers and fishers in vulnerable situations. AOS chaplains and volunteers do daily ship visits, welcome seafarers and fishers in the Stella Maris Centres, assist sick crew in the hospitals, act as interpreters, listen to their complaints, do referral work and support them in every possible way.

To duplicate the Project "*Haven in Harbour*" within the programme "*Prevention of and against Crime (ISEC) - Trafficking in Human Beings*", by identifying the port as a place of transit not only for seafarers, fishers, passengers and port workers but also for potential victims of trafficking. It might be interesting to explore opportunities to develop training courses for port personnel, so that they may be able to identify possible victims of trafficking and/or forced labor.

Suggestions for a common prevention strategy of faith-based organizations?

- Networking
- Sharing of information