

**National Task Force on Human Trafficking
Media briefing 11 April 2008**

**Welcoming Remarks by Gerry Finnegan
(ILO Representative for Malawi, Mozambique & Zambia)
On behalf of the UN Joint Team on Human Trafficking**

I am pleased to welcome you all to this morning's media briefing on human trafficking. The briefing is organised by the National Task Force on Human Trafficking, chaired by Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA). The purpose of this media briefing is to provide you with more and better information on what constitutes human trafficking in, through, to and from Zambia today.

The UN joint Programme on Trafficking, launched in 2007, is immensely pleased to be able to support the efforts of the Zambian Government and assist in combating and eliminating human trafficking. This morning's event is one of the ways in which the UN family and the Zambian Government are working together around this important issue.

As many of you will be aware, trafficking in human beings constitutes one of the most serious violations of basic human rights today. Children, women and men are trafficked into labour and sexual exploitation around the world – including in this part of the world.

Victims of trafficking end up in extremely exploitative situations, often living and working in forced labour and slave-like conditions. It is not surprising therefore that many people refer to human trafficking within the context of "modern day slavery".

To many people, the issue of human trafficking and all of its related problems, injustices and evils are largely unknown or unrecognised. Trafficking is largely hidden and illegal – it is not "in your face" every day, so many people do not consider the possibility that they, their children or someone in their family or community may end up being victims of trafficking.

In certain cases, trafficking isn't even recognised as "trafficking", but rather it is considered as the "normal" or accepted state of affairs. This happens when traditional systems of care and security, such as foster care for poorer relatives' children, degenerate into sources of recruitment of cheap, exploitable labour.

Traffickers take full advantage of the ignorance and silence that cloaks their activities. Therefore, the first and most important step in getting rid of the scourge of trafficking in children, women and men is to break that silence and make sure individuals, families and communities have greater awareness about trafficking, that they know their rights, and can be more vigilant.

This is really why we are all here this morning, as this is an important contribution that you in the media can play. The media play a crucial role in revealing this untold story to a wider audience. Indeed, it is with some sense of growing excitement and appreciation that the UN joint team has noted the recent increase in the media's interest in trafficking issues. But media reports alone are not enough. Such reports need to be accurate and factual, informed and able to embrace and reflect the many complexities around the issues of human trafficking. Producing quality reports that are likely to stimulate action against trafficking is a difficult task, and I sincerely hope that this morning's briefing will make this task as media professionals easier and more satisfying. I also hope that the information provided this morning will make it easier for you to produce quality reporting on human trafficking. It is also my hope that it will stimulate your interest in continued and increased reporting on the incidence and evils of trafficking.

Once again, I am very pleased to welcome you all to this morning's briefing, and I trust this will be the first step on our journey together to inform and empower potential victims of trafficking – and to make Zambia a “zero tolerance” and trafficking free nation.

It is now my pleasure to leave you in the hands of our formidable line-up of distinguished speakers. I thank you for your attention.