

21 September 2023

SDG Summit leadership gap on forced labour, trafficking and child labour – A sector response

Dear Ambassador to the United Nations,

This week, the SDG Summit drew to a close. It aimed to offer a crucial opportunity for Member States to reaffirm their commitments to the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the highest level and at its midpoint. Yet it also aimed, critically, to catalyse action and progress – recognizing the extent to which this has been [severely lagging](#) – underpinned by the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As you are aware, the Summit has been framed by a [Political Declaration](#) that has been under negotiation by Member States since January.

While we commend the efforts of the co-facilitators in a tough negotiation, we are disappointed to see that there was no commitment shown to specifically combat forced labour, human trafficking and the worst forms of child labour, as outlined in [Target 8.7](#), either in the Declaration or during the negotiations.

The prohibition of slavery is one of the highest norms of international law alongside, inter alia, torture, genocide and piracy. States have agreed that there is *no* acceptable reason for it not to be actively prohibited – indeed, nearly all have signed the 1926 Slavery Convention and the ILO Convention against Forced Labour, while others have signed up to accelerate action as Alliance 8.7 Pathfinders.

Meanwhile, less than three years away from the 100th anniversary of the Slavery Convention, contemporary forms of slavery continue to rise. The latest [Global Estimates](#) indicate that 50 million people were living in modern slavery in 2021, and research from the [United Nations University Centre for Policy Research \(2021\)](#), indicates that slavery impedes two-thirds of the sustainable development goals by, inter alia, weakening governance, creating intergenerational poverty, and institutionalizing inequality.

Yet regardless, in the lead-up to the Summit, we did not see meaningful global leadership on this issue.

We call on your State to step up in the global fight to combat slavery, and for all Member States to:

1. **Reaffirm their commitment, in the strongest terms possible, to the full, effective, and meaningful implementation of SDG 8.7:** “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”

This must be guided by international law and clear evidence in national practice. The strongest way to do this is by ratifying and implementing the ILO’s Forced Labour Protocol – the most

comprehensive international law on this practice, currently ratified by 60 States.

2. **Recognising that SDG 8.7 is deeply interconnected with achieving most of the SDGs**, significantly increase your Government's efforts to address the root causes of forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and the worst forms of child labour, inter alia, poverty, discrimination, gender inequality, climate change, and conflict.
3. **Ensure that all efforts and deliberative and decision-making processes are survivor-led, centred, and informed**, and commit to adopting multi-stakeholder and intergenerational partnerships to support prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts.

We look forward to engaging with you further on championing SDG 8.7 at the international level.

Thank you.

Signed:

1. Stolen Dreams
2. Anti-Slavery International
3. Migration Youth and Children Platform (MYCP)
4. Youth for Freedom Collective
5. Hope for Justice
6. Walk Free
7. Campaign For Uyghurs
8. Freedom United
9. #Seats4survivors
10. La Strada International
11. Uyghur Human Rights Project
12. Stepping Stones, North Korea
13. Corporate Accountability Lab
14. Association "Novi put"
15. Mission d'intervention et de sensibilisation contre la traite des êtres humains (Mist), France
16. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
17. Candle of Hope Foundation - Kenya and Somalia
18. Ella's, UK
19. Muwanga Development Association, Uganda
20. Life Bloom Services International, Kenya
21. Foundation for Innovative Social Development
22. The Andrew Lees Trust, UK
23. Corporate Justice Coalition, UK
24. Labour Behind the Label, UK
25. Oasis, India
26. Kiota Women Health and Development (KIWOHEDE), Tanzania

27. Street Girls Aid
28. Unseen
29. Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)
30. Youth Child Support Initiative (YCSI), Nigeria
31. Rwenzori Center for Research and Advocacy (RCRA), Uganda
32. Children on the Move Care Support and Protection Network in Nigeria (CMCSPNIN)
33. Network of Civil Society against Child Trafficking Abuse and Labour (NACTAL)
34. World Uyghur Congress
35. WORKERS RIGHTS WATCH
36. Equidem
37. It's a Penalty, UK
38. Stop Uyghur Genocide
39. The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking (CCTEHT)
40. Fundación Libera contra la Trata de Personas y la Esclavitud en Todas sus Formas, Chile
41. SERAC, Bangladesh
42. WARBE Development Foundation
43. Social Awareness and Voluntary Education, India
44. Anukatham Unorganised Workers Union, India
45. Corporación Espacios de Mujer, Colombia
46. RATT, Chile
47. Snowdrop Project, UK
48. Global Legal Action Network
49. Éxodo, Asociación Civil.
50. International Forum for Understanding
51. SDG2030.me
52. Shiva Foundation
53. Fashion Revolution
54. Kalayaan
55. The Freedom Fund
56. Comunita Volontari per il Mondo-CVM
57. Centro de Estudios y Apoyo al Desarrollo Local (CEADL) Bolivia
58. Repórter Brasil
59. Tunaweza Empowerment Organization
60. EverFree
61. Women's LEAD
62. Action for Integrated Sustainable Development Association (AISDA)
63. Youth Lens Hub (YLH), Uganda
64. Building Financial Freedom, US
65. Cannabis Education Guild
66. Uyghur American Association
67. Homeworkers Worldwide
68. Yayasan Srikandi Lestari, Indonesia
69. Climate Justice Indonesia, Indonesia
70. Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative, Indonesia

71. Justice & Care
72. Terre des Hommes International Federation
73. SOS Esclaves

Please also take note of a [Statement](#) released yesterday by the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Tomoya Obokata.

“I am disappointed that the #SDG Political Declaration does not reaffirm the commitment to eliminate contemporary #slavery as per #SDG8, Target 8.7. We are running out of time & need stronger leadership by the international community now.”