

Deputy High Commissioner Tom Hartley Speaking at the World Day Against Human Trafficking Stakeholders' Conference

Hon. Minister and Deputy Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection,
Freda Prempeh

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Civil society partners, colleagues from the diplomatic community

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, all protocols observed.

I am honoured to be a part of today's event "Blue Day" which marks the national commemoration of the world day against trafficking of persons.

Modern slavery is one of the biggest human rights challenges of our time. It attacks the most vulnerable, strips them of their freedom and often their humanity, and commits them to a life that, for some victims, is a fate worse than death. It is our responsibility as citizens of this earth to ensure it ends, and ends for good.

In September 2017, in the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York, many nations including Ghana joined the UK Prime Minister's Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT).

This was a clear statement of political will by the UK and an intent to work domestically, regionally, and internationally to achieve SDG 8.7 – and to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, and end modern slavery and human trafficking. So far over 60 countries have endorsed the UK's Call to Action (including Ghana, USA, Australia, Japan and Italy).

The UK is a long standing partner to the Government of Ghana and is committed to accelerating Ghana's move towards self-reliance, in line His Excellency The President's 'Beyond Aid' agenda. We have a deep partnership across security, prosperity, and inclusion, including our strong people to people links.

For this partnership to flourish, together we agree that all of the UK's and Ghana's citizens must benefit from economic growth. We must make it inclusive, and shaped to address poverty and protect the most vulnerable and marginalised groups. Today, we recognise an important aspect of this shared goal: tackling human trafficking.

Almost every country has national human trafficking laws, yet people continue to be trafficked – the majority of them, women and girls. We welcome the progress made by Ghana in tackling modern slavery, through implementing the

Human Trafficking and Children's Acts (banning employment of children), the National Action Plan and creating an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit within the police to investigate cases and refer individuals for prosecution.

The UK is partnering with the Government of Ghana to protect the most vulnerable and marginalised through the "Leave No One Behind" social protection programme. It is supported with £39.2m of UK funding over the next five years.

A key component of the programme supports a centralised channel for beneficiaries of all social protection programmes to raise grievances and report violations and other abuses, report malpractices, and request information on all social protection programmes. This has been operationalised through the creation of a call center called the Helpline of Hope situated at the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection.

Honourable Minister and Colleagues, this is not all.

There are many other UK Government Departments in Accra working with our Ghanaian partners to see Ghana make broader gains in the fight to end MSHT. I am pleased that our integrated approach has brought in expertise from the UK Border Force, UK Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC UK), Immigration Enforcement International, National Crime Agency (NCA), The Department of International Development, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

All these departments and agencies are committed to the same goal to tackle human trafficking.

I would like to give you some examples, of how this work is making a difference:

- The National Crime Agency has setup a Technical Working Group (TWG) Coalition in Ghana on MSHT which aims to strengthen coordination among various Government agencies NGO's to enable them to collaborate more effectively, share intelligence that will address organised crime elements of human trafficking, enhance the identification of suspects and victims, and support prosecutions.
- The UK's National Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC UK) have been working with stakeholders to raise standards of safeguarding and child protection in Ghana. This programme was delivered in partnership with some local anti-child trafficking partners (Afrikids, GIS, GP, DSW).
- The UK Border Force provides mentorship that enhances targeting and profiling capabilities across all border crimes, including human trafficking and modern slavery. With their support, an Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) has been formed. This Unit has been set up to intercept potential victims of human trafficking from travelling outbound and debriefing those arriving back into the country.

- On the legislative side, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is supporting Ghanaian MPs to strengthen anti-slavery legislation, and empower them in advocating against Modern Slavery-related crimes, and support more effective parliamentary committees for better oversight and scrutiny of modern slavery-related legislation and its implementation. I was pleased to see them here last month, to highlight the issue of human trafficking in football.

I am also very pleased that Kim Bridger – the UK’s current head of Modern Slavery policy – is joining my team in Accra as our new Justice & Home Affairs advisor. She will bring with her unprecedented experience and expertise, and I expect her to be a real force for good, including on convening all actors – international partners, the UN, international NGOs, local NGOs, traditional leaders, religious organisations and law enforcement – to come alongside the government of Ghana to help ensure Ghana becomes the safest place in Africa for individuals at risk of human trafficking.

These examples give you a sense of the challenge but also the strong UK-Ghana partnership that is delivering real progress in tackling Human Trafficking. Looking ahead, we will continue to support the Government of Ghana as it looks to implement the anti-human trafficking measures set out in its legislation, and we look forward to more successful prosecutions, and stronger support and protection of victims of Human Trafficking.

Ending Human Trafficking is a shared global challenge. It is up to us to work together to stop to it, for good.

Thank you.