

News story: Fashion industry unites to tackle slavery and trafficking in supply chains

Ahead of Paris Fashion Week, the minister spoke at the Paris Supply Chains Conference today (Friday 22 February), where representatives from governments, the fashion industry, textiles and civil society came together to discuss measures businesses should take to eradicate modern slavery and trafficking in their supply chains.

The minister highlighted how UK's world leading Modern Slavery Act has helped transform business culture. She praised brands for changing their purchasing practices to protect vulnerable workers and innovative start-ups which are increasing transparency in the sector.

While recognising the progress that many responsible businesses are making the minister called on the industry to step up their action and increase their vigilance to understand the risks and intervene where necessary.

Both the UK and France have introduced transparency legislation to tackle forced labour in global supply chains and the conference provided a valuable opportunity to share best practice in tackling this insidious crime. The minister welcomed the French government's determination to stamp out modern slavery and called for continued collaboration to speed up eliminating this abhorrent crime.

In her speech Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Minister Victoria Atkins said:

I am proud to say that the UK is a world-leader in tackling slavery. In 2015, we introduced the landmark Modern Slavery Act to tackle slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking.

As we meet in Paris, I am also proud to say that the French government stands alongside us in their determination to eliminate human trafficking and labour exploitation.

Since legislation was introduced on both sides of the channel we have seen progress made, however the scale of the challenge means that it can only be tackled by government, business and civil society working together.

In addition to the ground breaking Modern Slavery Act, the government has also:

- launched the "Principles to Combat Human Trafficking in Global Supply

Chains” with the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand at the UN General Assembly in September 2018

- written to 17,000 businesses in the UK about their obligations to publish what they are doing to tackle modern slavery in their supply chains, with the Home Office planning to name non-compliant companies after the end of the financial year
- pledged to publish its own transparency statement in 2019
- launched the “Business Against Slavery Forum” to bring together CEOs of some of the world’s largest organisations to share best practice to tackle modern slavery

The minister also welcomed the appointment of Sara Thornton, who was today announced as the new Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.