

News story: Leading businesses unite to tackle slavery

Eight of the most influential business leaders in the UK have joined together to spearhead pioneering industry action to drive out slavery from supply chains.

The group who represent some of the largest companies in the UK – who collectively employ over 800,000 people and have a combined turnover of more than £140 billion a year – united as the founding members of the Business Against Slavery Forum, which launched on Monday (9 October) in partnership with the government.

The 8 founding members are: Mark Cutifani, Anglo American CEO; Jeremy Darroch, SKY CEO; Stuart Gulliver, HSBC CEO; Marco Gobetti, Burberry CEO; Gavin Patterson, BT CEO; Sir Martin Sorrell, WPP CEO; Jes Staley, Barclays CEO; George Weston, ABF CEO.

The first Business Against Slavery Forum, held at Lancaster House, was chaired by Home Secretary Amber Rudd, and attended by Sarah Newton, Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, and John Studzinski CBE, non-executive Director at the Home Office and Vice Chairman at Blackstone. The forum brings CEOs together to share experiences and inspire more action to stamp out the barbaric crime at its source.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

The founding members of the Business Against Slavery Forum have shown bravery by refusing to ignore the fact forced labour can be a problem in any supply chain and by coming together to do even more to combat it.

Much progress has already been made, but by sharing their expertise and experience in identifying and tackling slavery these business leaders will help consign it to the history books.

They have refused to turn their backs on the victims of this barbaric crime. I hope other firms will do the same, so together we can force slavery out of hidden corners of the supply chains that contribute to the products and services which are part of all our daily lives.

The Business Against Slavery Forum will be a platform to help businesses identify, tackle and prevent slavery in their supply chains, to encourage them to share intelligence and best practice, and to help boost the quality of transparency reporting under the Modern Slavery Act.

During the first meeting, participants discussed the leadership role they can

play in tackling modern slavery (which may involve encouraging more collaboration, piloting new approaches, generating best practice and aiming to raise standards in their sector). Business leaders will attend the Business Against Slavery forum twice a year and will send representatives to more frequent working meetings.

Following the world-leading Modern Slavery Act 2015, the forum will build on work already underway by large firms to publish annual Transparency in Supply Chain Statements to demonstrate the action they are taking to ensure slave labour plays no part in producing their goods or services.

Despite progress made by businesses in stamping out global slavery, forced labour still generates \$150 billion in illicit profits every year.

Home Office non-executive director John Studzinski CBE said:

I am pleased that the Home Secretary and business leaders are coming together to discuss what more we can do to tackle the abomination of modern slavery.

We must be innovative; showing that ethical profit is possible. And I am convinced that companies will reap benefits from doing the right thing.

Other large businesses will also be able to join the group as associate members.