

# Speech: Penny Mordaunt speech on Modern Slavery at UNGA 2018

Good morning and thank you all for being here. I'm Penny Mordaunt and I'm the UK Secretary of State for International Development and it's my privilege to be chairing the session today.

A year ago, the UK Prime Minister was joined by world leaders to launch a Call to Action to eliminate the scourge of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking from our societies once and for all. It is fitting that they came together here at the United Nations General Assembly because the UN is the centre of this fight.

We are making progress. But we need more urgency. As the Secretary General has said, we need to respond to people trafficking with the same speed and sense of purpose as we do with drug and gun trafficking.

The Call to Action is not meant to replicate existing frameworks like the Palermo Protocol to counter Human Trafficking, the Forced Labour Protocol or initiatives such as Alliance 8.7. It is here to energise all of them. To put combatting modern slavery at the top of our political agendas and to spur countries to increase their efforts. To demonstrate our collective will to deliver on our agenda and the 2030 commitment.

I'm pleased to stand before you today to report that 77 countries, well over a third of the UN membership, have now endorsed this Call to Action. And I encourage those who have not yet done so to join us in this visible statement of intent, which will now be housed on a new knowledge platform that is being launched by the UN University today.

I am also delighted to be joined by my esteemed co-hosts from Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Canada, Nigeria and the United States, countries who have been championing this agenda. It is a true demonstration of the need to tackle this crime in every region of the world. Shortly you will hear from them on the steps they have taken over the last year to turn that political will into action.

Because whether it's young girls affected by trafficking across borders for sex, men and women forced to work in factories and fields, or the child labour that goes into our smartphones, no nation is free from the terrible abuses and violence that go hand in hand with these human rights violations.

The statistics are shocking. At least 40 million victims of modern slavery, 25 million victims of forced labour, and perhaps the most troubling – one in four victims of modern slavery is a child. And beyond those statistics are real people, enduring real suffering.

Child slavery is truly one of the most heinous crimes imaginable. It has no place in any society. We must do more to protect and support all those at

risk of falling into the clutches of people traffickers and organised criminals, but particularly those children who are most vulnerable. Children caught up in conflict, many of those who have lost parents or carers, children displaced from their homes because of war, child refugees trying to escape along the dangerous routes on their own.

And that is why the UK is stepping up its support. Last year, our Prime Minister vowed to double the amount the UK spends on combatting modern slavery up to £150 million. And today, I can report that we are, in fact, increasing our funding to over £200 million so we can reach those most in need of our help.

£10 million of that will go to UNICEF to protect more than 400,000 boys and girls at risk of violence and slavery in the Horn of Africa and along migratory routes in Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia. UK Aid, working with UNICEF, will provide birth registration services so children can legally prove their age, identity and nationality. Giving them protections against forced labour and underage marriage. Our support will also educate vulnerable children against the dangers of trafficking, support social workers and carers to respond to the needs of vulnerable people, and help reintegrate victims back into society.

And we are investing £26 million in a new regional programme to tackle child labour in South Asia. This will be alongside a £5 million to support the Government of Bangladesh fulfil its ambitious commitment to end hazardous Child Labour by 2021.

As our Prime Minister said on her recent visit to South Africa, we have to tackle the root causes of instability and extremism that fuel people trafficking.

That means promoting political stability and economic growth. Creating the quality jobs to meet the needs and aspirations of a growing and young population, and helping lift people out of poverty themselves.

The UK has committed £21 million to support the Government of Nigeria in their efforts to combat trafficking, £3 million of which will provide 30,000 improved livelihoods in Edo State, a known trafficking hotspot. By providing better jobs than those traffickers and criminals promise, we hope to reduce the number of people who end up being duped and exploited.

Traffickers thrive in fragile and conflict-afflicted states. That is why we are pledging up to £12 million, through UK Aid Connect, in areas of concern in Africa, to equip thousands of girls and boys with the knowledge and skills to help them avoid falling victim to traffickers. As well as improving livelihoods opportunities for families this funding will also support businesses to improve their supply chains to ensure child labour is eradicated.

These are just some of the steps that the UK is taking with our partners. Working together to end trafficking is firmly in the interests of all our nations. As well as acting individually to stop abuses, we must have a more

joined-up approach. That means better co-ordination between governments, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector. And it also means greater action from the development community.

This is why the UK, alongside the US, has committed £20 million to the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, which aims to develop new and innovative approaches to tackling slavery. The fund aims to be transformative and we hope that other donors will invest.

Because delivering true change can only happen if we act in partnership and at scale. And this also means getting the private sector on board.

It is shocking that forced labour is embedded in almost every supply chain. It has become 'normalised'. When so little value reaches the people working at the end of our supply chains, it is not surprising that slavery is so widespread. It is not good enough for businesses to turn a blind eye or say they did not know.

We need every CEO in every company to recognise this reality and place at the heart of their business plans this issue. And some companies and investors are leading that change.

In our second panel today, you will hear more about the innovative solutions and approaches that companies are championing, such as Blockchain technology, to trace the origin of a product and its journey from source to sale. And we need more of these leaders, and to tap into the expertise of those at the forefront of technological innovation, if we are going to be successful in this fight.

But as we do this, must also ensure our own house is in order. That is why I can announce that the UK will take action to eliminate slavery from our own public procurement practises alongside a review of our Modern Slavery Act to ensure that our legislation is as strong and effective as it can be. And the message here is clear. Doing business with the UK requires you to act responsibly.

I hope this event today will shine a light on the encouraging progress, innovative solutions and lasting partnerships we are making, as well as the extra steps that we must take.

Because we must not forget that as we speak, millions of men, women and children are living and working in unimaginable conditions, facing violence, abuse, exploitation on a daily basis.

We owe it to them to put our strong words into even stronger actions, to hold ourselves accountable for our commitments, and to ensure that each day is a day closer to ending this injustice.

And now I would now like to introduce Rani Hong – a survivor of child trafficking and a leading voice in the fight against modern slavery. Her dedication to this injustice is truly inspirational and I am delighted that she has been able to join us here today.