

Speech: PM speech to UNGA on modern slavery: 'behind these numbers are real people.'

So, it's fitting that we gather here today, united in our determination to eliminate the scourge of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. Modern slavery exists in all our societies. It respects neither borders nor jurisdictions. Its victims are subject to the most appalling mistreatment and exploitation. And the scale of the challenge, which will be set out in more detail in new estimates from Alliance 8.7 in a moment, is sobering, and brings our task into sharp focus.

Behind these numbers are real people suffering terrible abuse, and if we're to meet our ambition to eradicate forced labour, and end modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030, we know we have a long way to go. And that's why I've invited you here today, as leaders who are committed to addressing these barbaric crimes, to champion this cause through a collective call to action. This is a statement of intent through which our shared vision and values can be realised. Its message is clear: we will not tolerate these crimes in our societies.

It is hard to bring out into the open and defeat something which has persisted for so many years in the shadows, but we have a duty as leaders to do so, and if we are to succeed, it will require our concerted efforts, our efforts at home, but also internationally, to drive and to deliver a coherent global response.

Now, all of you here today have demonstrated leadership on this issue, and I look forward to hearing more from you. But before that, I just wanted to offer some very brief words about what the UK is doing to address these crimes. In 2015, we introduced the world's first Modern Slavery Act, and we're now seeing the first convictions for the new offences it introduced.

But to address this insidious crime, I know that more needs to be done, so today, I'm pleased to announce a series of further measures that will be implemented in my country. We will train new specialist investigators and frontline police officers, and we will develop the expertise of prosecutors so that they can better handle complex cases and support traumatised victims.

But for a crime that has no respect for borders, we need a truly international response. We will therefore host an international summit of chief prosecutors next spring, and in addition, the UK will double its aid spending on modern slavery to £150 million, enabling more work in collaboration with source and transit countries. And this will also include £20 million of seed funding to the new Global Fund to End Modern Slavery. We're delighted to be contributing to this initiative which my US colleague, Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan, will say more about, and I wholeheartedly commend this initiative to you all.

The commitments we make here today through the call to action lay strong foundations for more effective action. The task is an urgent one, so we need swiftly to put our words into practice and hold ourselves to account for progress. And I would like to open the floor to the Secretary General of the United Nations. And before I do so, can I just say, I would like to pay tribute to the commitment that he's personally shown to this agenda.