



PRESS RELEASE

Parliamentarians from Asia-Pacific Strengthen Commitment to Combat Human Trafficking



Members of Parliament, Ministers and experts from intergovernmental organizations, UN agencies and CSOs from 21 Asia-Pacific countries met at the Regional Parliamentarians Conference on Combatting Human Trafficking on March 21 – 22, 2017, in Bangkok, Thailand. (Photo: AFPPD)

BANGKOK, 27 March 2017 – Over 40 Members of Parliament and 20 experts from 21 Asia-Pacific countries adopted the [Statement of Commitment](#) to “end human trafficking in all its forms” at the **Regional Parliamentarians Conference on Combatting Human Trafficking** on March 21-22 in Bangkok, Thailand. The two-day conference, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Government of Australia, was co-organized by the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and the South Asian Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC), the apex body of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SARRC).

The [Statement of Commitment](#) was unanimously adopted after much deliberation at the final session of the conference chaired by H. E. Dr. Seree Nonthasoot, Representative of Thailand to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. It ensures a zero tolerance policy against all those involved in trafficking in persons, reaffirming the critical role of parliamentarians to review, amend, enact and enforce legislation on prevention, prosecution, protection, including rehabilitation of survivors, and other measures through accelerated coordination.

Parliamentarians committed to reinforcing the accountability of their respective governments in addressing and ending human trafficking.

AFPPD Secretary General, Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, Member of the National Legislative Assembly of Thailand, welcomed the participants, followed by opening remarks delivered by four dignitaries. H.E. Paul Robilliard, Ambassador of Australia to Thailand, congratulated ASEAN leaders from six countries on the ratification of the Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) which came into force this March. He further stressed the importance of accelerated efforts in achieving the human trafficking related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including Target 8.7. H.E. Amjad Hussain Sial, Secretary-General of SARRC, highlighted remaining challenges especially in coordination among key stakeholders. “It is a pressing need of the hour to evolve a concerted and well-coordinated response to address the global menace of human trafficking.”

Thailand’s efforts in tackling human trafficking were also highlighted by Mr. Suthi Sukosol, Inspector General at the Ministry of Labour of Thailand, noting the establishment of a specialized anti-trafficking prosecution and court division, and increased training for local actors, such as the police, judges, labour inspectors, and social workers. H.E. Mr. Isra Sunthornvut, Secretary General of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, also urged fellow parliamentarians to address the implementation challenges of anti-trafficking measures. “As legislators, our only legacy is the legislation that we leave behind. And there are two types of legislation: the legislation that remains on paper and the legislation that is taken seriously and implemented,” he asserted. “We should all rally behind the fight for the eradication of human trafficking, including the sexual exploitation of children, because this is not only a legal issue but also a moral issue.”

Expert organizations which contributed to subsequent knowledge sharing and discussion sessions included the Australia Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons, ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), ECPAT, Plan International, UNESCAP, UN Women, UNICEF, UN-ACT (COMMIT)/UNDP, ILO, SDGs Alliance 8.7 and High Time Movement 16.2.

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Background: AFPPD is a network of 29 parliamentary committees from across the Asia-Pacific region. AFPPD advocates for parliamentary action and change, in support of population and development issues: gender equality and women’s empowerment including sexual and reproductive health and rights; investing in youth; active ageing; and population dynamics.

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