



Speech by

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at the

Opening Session of the

**END HUMAN TRAFFICKING NOW: ENFORCING THE UN PROTOCOL
Luxor International Forum**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

A warm welcome to Egypt!

I am so inspired by this impressive gathering. It represents so many cultures, languages, ages and yet is united by one common bond, our shared humanity!

I thank you all for having responded to my call to join in a battle that is at the core of basic human dignity – the struggle against human trafficking.

It is no coincidence that Luxor was chosen as the site of our Forum. It is a city that symbolizes remarkable achievement – a repository of ancient wisdom and the dawn of human consciousness. A city of beauty, whose writings on the walls and temples portray countless stories of compassion, of cooperation and victories when all seemed lost.

It is fitting that we come to this place, at this time, to take inspiration as we tackle the evil of modern slavery and the most deplorable of all forms of illicit trade – trafficking in human beings.

Slavery is not new, nor is the struggle against it, *but* on this day, we gather to strengthen our resolve and draw on the wisdom of the ancients in charting a new, accelerated course of action for the future!

Ladies and Gentlemen – Look at your watches!

1 second from now a young woman will be trafficked into the sex trade and enter into a world of “shadows” unknown to us.

5 minutes ago – a poor family accepted money for their daughter to go to the big city on the promise of decent work; but in fact she will become a “lady of the evening” at the age of 12.

As the minutes tick away on our watches – boys and young men are forced to work in coal and diamond mines under the most inhumane conditions with the stark realization that this will be their short life until they can lift and dig no more.

As I speak, a child living on the street in a city which will remain nameless is kidnapped and put to sleep – and when he awakens, will find that his kidney is being bartered and sold in the open market.

We have heard the statistics many times before.

Millions of people each year around the world, primarily women and children, are bought, sold, transported or held against their will to be sexually abused and exploited. There is clear evidence that an even larger number are coerced in working in servitude and slavery-like conditions.

I personally find it difficult to comprehend some of the horrible things that I hear or see.

What kind of world are we living in? How did we allow child sex tourism to become an organized multimillion-dollar industry with its own tour guides, websites and brothel maps?

Do you remember reading the news about the founder of a prominent children's charity who admitted using the promise of food, shelter and clean clothes to lure in homeless children for sexual exploitation.

It really is heartbreaking that at this very moment with the click of the mouse, countless pornographic pictures of young girls and boys are available on the internet robbing them of their innocence, human dignity and self-worth.

The examples are endless, but we all know that behind the stories and the statistics, these are people who are searching for personal security, a way out of poverty and repression, who seek any channel to escape conflict and discrimination or an opportunity to realize their dreams and aspirations. Instead they find hopelessness and despair.

For those of us who believe that the world can be a better place, who believe in the goodness of humankind, in the human rights of all men and women, girls and boys everywhere, these scenarios are unacceptable!

So I ask you, has Palermo really made a difference in 10 years?

My answer is definitely yes. However, our struggle is ongoing.

Since the adoption of the Protocol, we have seen laws enacted and legislation put in place to close “loopholes” that have been used by traffickers to prey on the vulnerable. At the same time, we have seen that those involved in this shady endeavor have become more cunning and more sophisticated in their methods.

Within this context, traffickers are operating skillfully through labour market regimes, utilizing the discrepancies that occur between different national, legal, and financial systems and adapting effectively to the pace of globalization.

Today, we know much more about the mechanisms of organized crime’s use of social networking sites and the latest communication technology to pursue their lethal aims.

We understand better that the dire conditions, the temptation to make quick money at all costs gradually destroys social norms and the traditional family values of responsibility and protection.

We also have a better sense of the need for powerful partnerships working together, across regions, nationalities, and gender to tackle a common foe that recognizes no borders.

We have learned a lot but there are still so many who are indifferent or remain uninformed.

Yes, we can applaud the progress made. *But* let us not forget that as we gather in this Forum to take stock of the situation and discuss what more can be done, others meet at this very minute in another place plotting a counter strategy to circumvent and expand the human trafficking trade! To them human life has no value.

What lessons have we learned that can guide our ongoing work? What concrete examples can provide insights for a way forward?

In answering these questions, I would like to share my own experience and journey which has brought me here today.

A few years ago, I myself knew very little about human trafficking. It was only when I began working more closely on issues related to violence against women and children that I came across this terrible reality – an ultimate form of violence, an assault on human dignity.

Not only did I discover its magnitude, the conditions that made it flourish, and the lack of legal frameworks and laws to protect the victims, but at the same time I also learned so much more about the brave women, who despite immensely challenging situations of poverty and conflict, were still able to help build safe and secure societies, break down barriers to reconciliation and understanding and create opportunities for dialogue and cooperation.

I came to better understand how their participation has been vital in turning fractured communities whole again, re-building infrastructure, re-establishing severed relationships.

I realized how they actually possess exceptional survival and transformation skills during extremely testing times – for they do not just think of themselves as victims, as they search for ways and means to survive and protect those around them.

In honor of many of these phenomenal women, to support their work, every step of the way, taking pride in sharing their stories of courage, and helping them to realize their dreams for a better future, I founded the **Women's International Peace Movement**.

Since then, I have met and worked with courageous private sector leaders who speak out and lead on other global issues such as health, education, human rights, justice, peace, environmental awareness and women's empowerment. They have redefined a new vision of business success – not just making money and increasing profits *but* also taking an active role as community citizens.

Indeed, I have strong faith in the private sector. As my own personal experience has shown me, they are an indispensable partner and a powerful force in achieving our collective aspirations. They have the ability to affect the pace, scope and scale of change, with the power to enable, empower and encourage people to achieve personal prosperity and security.

I believe that the business community as a whole, through its global outreach and network of connections, can greatly contribute to removing the root causes of human trafficking. They can provide social protection to vulnerable groups and support community-based prevention programs. It is only by reducing social exclusion and discrimination, addressing economic disparities and weak protection systems that we can make a sustainable difference.

The engagement of the business community is so well highlighted in the global campaign “End Human Trafficking Now”.

We set out with a bold and innovative strategy, which thanks to the efforts of our partners has garnered serious results on the ground. In fact, day by day, many prominent corporations and an increasing number of business leaders from around the world are adopting the Athens Ethical Principles of 2006, End Human Trafficking Now’s main tool of action which calls for businesses to adopt a zero tolerance policy towards human trafficking.

And here I would like to pay special tribute to what the private sector in Egypt has been doing. These dedicated business leaders have decided that they will be a part of the solution and not the problem. They have mobilized themselves to address this issue at its root causes.

I am also heartened to see that young Egyptian entrepreneurs are active too – working within business networks and among their peers. Let us encourage them because their task will not be an easy one!

At the same time, the Government and civil society have been equally active.

A bold measure is in process, whereby a new business cannot even begin operating in Egypt, without complying with a clause to observe zero tolerance for human trafficking.

Under the umbrella of a national coordinating committee, involving all stakeholders, the Egyptian Parliament has adopted a comprehensive law to criminalize human trafficking, and now an integrated and inclusive national strategy and action plan is ready for implementation. These policies are the “motor” that will help accelerate the efforts of all segments of our society.

Let me speak frankly.

We are engaged in a grassroots movement. We not only want business leaders, government officials and development partners to take action; but we also want the taxi driver, the woman selling fruit and vegetables in the local market, middle-class families in the urban cities and rural community members farming in the Delta – everyone, I mean everyone to be seized by the urgency and need to work together. In Egypt, our vision is a better world for all!

So, what have I learned the most? What key lessons can I share?

From my experience, I learned 3 important factors that have contributed to the achievements realized to date. To me, they are signposts that can guide our ongoing collective work against human trafficking:

First, I discovered the importance of **courage** to break the walls of silence, not to shy away; revealing all the facts and the truth.

Second, I found that we must demonstrate **determination and persistence** to stand up against human trafficking in the strongest of means possible, no matter how big the challenge, nor how long it takes.

Third, I was able to reaffirm the power of a **commitment to real partnership**, to work not as one but as the many, jointly and collectively – building on each other’s strengths to rally public opinion and action. It is our secret weapon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Look around you. Look at your neighbor to the right and to the left. It is “us”... Each of us has an important role to play! And all of us are partners in this endeavor.

And here I would like to point out that our partnership with the **UN** has been extremely gratifying. Our work with **civil society** has been essential, and our shared experience with **experts** and **scholars** has been invaluable. These **public-private partnerships** must continue to form the very foundation of our joint struggle against this elusive enemy.

Today, **national governments** have a primary responsibility in addressing the gaps that exist in policies and procedures that allow traffickers to operate with impunity. They are responsible for carrying out law enforcement measures against individuals and illicit businesses.

And just as organized crime crosses borders, likewise our coordination efforts must extend beyond them and between all countries.

Media must continue to raise difficult questions and put the spotlight on trafficking wherever it occurs. They must continue to give a voice to the voiceless and alert the wider public to the complexities, challenges and risks of human trafficking. They are instrumental in keeping this issue on the global political agenda.

We have with us today well-known **public personalities**, whose fame and ability, reaches into households and shows the “human face” of trafficking and the pain it causes to innocent victims. They are able to mirror the realities of modern slavery and its challenges in ways that inform and mobilize concerned citizens.

Now, I would like the **young people** who are present here to stand. Isn't it amazing that they have come from 39 countries all over the world to be with us!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The youth you see before and around you are one of our special forces in the fight against human trafficking. They are willing advocates, with the latest skills in IT and social networking, peer leaders with a 'can do' spirit and "thinking outside the box" ideas. They communicate across all national boundaries in a millisecond and bring energy beyond their years.

We will all be able to witness your creativity in this Forum, listen to your success stories and explore together how we can change the future.

Now to turn to one of the most crucial links, that of the **business community**.

And here at this critical juncture a 'business as usual' approach is just no longer conceivable. I think we can all agree that we need to go beyond where we are now to a new point in time, where we can see the Athens Ethical Principles converted into guidelines and mainstreamed into daily business activity; where codes of ethics and conduct and self-regulatory measures are part and parcel of day to day corporate thinking and strategizing.

In the same vein, leaders of the business community should set the example on what they stand to gain from enhancing positive corporate practices as both a measure of their own success and a long term investment.

Today we are calling for comprehensive compliance programs.

It is in this same spirit and mindset that we are launching, here in Luxor, the first international Business Leader's Award, cosponsored by UN.GIFT, the UN Compact and End Human Trafficking Now, to honour the energy and creativity of the **business leader of the year**.

The award process has enabled us to discover true heroes – many are with us today –who have shown that being a "community citizen" is not only common sense but it is also 'good business'!

And while there will be only one winner, they are *all* winners. They are *all* champions.

We will all have the opportunity to hear more about the truly inspirational work they are doing during the Award Ceremony itself.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I recognize that the war against human trafficking may not be won tomorrow or next year. There is no timetable, *but* I do believe that we will succeed in the long term.

Every bit of progress, every step in the right direction, every call to action helps to save lives and alleviate suffering.

As I gaze across the audience, I am reminded of our collective power. Working as one united voice, we represent

- those who can provide business solutions with a human face, youthful energy;
- those with eyes and ears to the ground that can monitor and keep us on track;
- those with the ability to reach out to individuals and families in homes to touch not only the mind but also the heart;
- those who can set national and international policies that create an environment which allows for women and men to raise their children in a world where human dignity prevails.

The Forum poster, which depicts the two arms of Queen Tye and Princess Meritaten pointing to the sky, should be forever etched in our memory as a defining moment. One which will enable us to recount the story of how we came together, resilient and undeterred, in the pursuit of a shared vision – to combat one of the most lethal of human crimes.

When our children and their children look back on this day, let them remember us as women and men of firm resolve who stood together to say ‘Stop Human Trafficking NOW’!

Thank you.