



G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021

## Preliminary Recommendations, July 10, 2021

### IF20 Anti-Racism Initiative

#### **Avenues for Action by G20 Leaders and States: An International Commission of Inquiry on Racism and Discriminatory Policies and Practices:**

Racism, in its many expressions including multiple practices of discrimination, is globally ubiquitous and seemingly stubbornly persistent. While we recognize the day-to-day impact of individual acts of racism, the G20 processes offer a potential to engage systemic and structural racism with a view to bold action. This deserves an explicit priority because of racism's grave social, ethical, economic, legal, political, and religious and spiritual impacts. The wide and interconnected impact of racism and racial prejudice for all Sustainable Development Goals and targets as well as, more immediately, the multifaceted COVID19 emergencies, argues for action by the G20 to take on anti-racism as a central and continuing agenda focus.

The G20 Interfaith Forum, through its Anti-Racism Initiative and its other policy work, is committed to confronting racism in all its forms, with the aspiration of supporting actions that eradicate it. Healing, reconciliation, and equity are unachievable without attending to that goal.

The G20 Interfaith Forum recommends that, to establish a solid analytic foundation for continuing action, the G20 establish an International Commission on Racism. The goals of such a Commission would be:

- To give central prominence to an underlying issue that in differing forms affects both nations and international relations, and to task the G20 leaders with responsibility to act.
- To assemble a tightly organized, multidisciplinary group of prominent statespeople, scholars, and experts for gathering the considerable collective wisdom that exists on positive action paths.
- To set out in a widely promulgated document specific principles and proposals that will spur appropriate and urgent action.

#### **Racism in its Multifaceted Forms is the Crisis of Crises**

Racial injustice permeates the many crises that threaten humanity. It is a common thread that, if root causes are left unaddressed, threatens the legitimacy of the international order. Racist practices influence policies and structures that undermine international cooperation in vaccine distribution, food security, and climate mitigation and adaptation.

Efforts that address racial injustice reinforce the stabilization of the international order and promote economic development.

#### **Contributions of Interfaith Organizations and Communities**

Interfaith organizations recognize the importance of commissions of the kind that we are proposing. Although commissions can be imperfect, they provide a principled way of opening up necessary

conversations and facing with honesty and courage some of the challenges we face in the world. There are historical examples of such commissions in recent history and in several regions of the world, including several in G20 member states. While religious communities have at times been part of the problem, they can also be part of the solution. As religious communities begin to reclaim their spiritual roots as distinct from their institutional constructs, they may more effectively speak for the needs and aspirations of the 82% of the human community who have a religious affiliation. The antidote for racism is to accept and embrace the full humanity of every person. This includes the sacredness of human conscience and the full dignity and access to all human rights which are inherent in the world's religious and spiritual traditions. These religious attributes require legal protection and promotion to achieve a culture of respect for human beings.

## **Recommendation**

To achieve peace among cultures and peace among religions, it is our conviction that the scourge of racism must be addressed. We believe the background and arguments above to present a compelling case.

We therefore recommend the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry with members from the 19 nations of the G20 and the European Union. We acknowledge that Commissions of Inquiry of many sorts have a rich history with mixed results. While a Commission of Inquiry's findings and recommendations are not binding, they significantly influence public opinion, shape public policy, and promote healing.

The IF20 urges the leaders of the G20 to consider this recommendation and pledge to commit its considerable networks and resources to its realization.

## **G20 Interfaith Forum Brief: Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking**

Pope Francis has called modern slavery and human trafficking "A scourge that wounds the dignity of our weakest brothers and sisters," and describes our contemporary world as "marked by a utilitarian perspective that views others according to the criteria of convenience and personal gain."<sup>1</sup> These words sadly reflect the truth of the current stewardship of this planet, and without radical change the legacy we leave behind for generations to come might be one of divided communities, those with wealth and privilege and those who are marginalised and seen as weak or even disposable.

### **Our World Today**

The world has experienced a monumental shift of normality over the past 18 months, where the Covid 19 pandemic has affected every aspect of life for all people. We are seeing the gap between rich and poor and its growth more vividly, which brings increased vulnerability and hardship to 'the least of these'. Extreme poverty and hunger are rising, driving unrest, instability and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-08/pope-francis-human-trafficking-scourge-against-dignity.html>

vulnerability for the poorest. “After nearly a decade of progress, the number of hungry people has slowly increased — driven by the twin scourges of conflict and climate change, and now compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. There are 34 million people in three-dozen countries at the ‘emergency’ phase of food insecurity in 2021, just one step away from a declaration of famine.”<sup>2</sup> (World Food Programme).

In January 2021, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres stated that “Humanitarian needs have multiplied, reaching the highest levels since the Second World War, and the number of people at risk of starvation has doubled.” Warning that such trends have put many countries in a vicious cycle — in which conflict breeds poverty, poverty breeds fragility and fragility decreases resilience to conflict — he went on to note that, “for the first time in 22 years, extreme poverty was on the rise in 2020.”<sup>3</sup> The pandemic has had a “particularly negative impact ... on refugees and migrants, including how it has been used in some cases as a pretext to suspend refugee resettlement programs, and how quarantine measures imposed on overcrowded migrant camps, combined with frustration over squalid living conditions, have led to humanitarian crises.”<sup>4</sup>

Poverty is a major factor that creates the vulnerability which forces many men, women and children into exploitative situations. So too is the insecurity, and often desperation that families experience when forced to leave the stability of their homes due to conflict and persecution. Over recent years there has been a great deal of movement across continents and borders by individuals and family groups who are trying to find a better life. Often these people pay large sums of money to people smugglers to facilitate their journey, which puts them into extremely vulnerable situations where the criminals then demand more, leading to debt bondage and human trafficking. People smuggling and human trafficking are distinctly different in their legal definitions, but both prey on the vulnerability of human beings.

It is inconceivable to think that someone would choose to take the precarious journey over land and across seas, alone or with family members, relying on complete strangers for their safety, if they were not seeking or sometimes desperate for a safe and better life. Millions of men, women and children have become more vulnerable than ever before because of the need to find the basic necessities to survive and are therefore forced into desperate situations of exploitation. “The profound economic hardship caused by the COVID-19 outbreak is exposing the most vulnerable to risks of sexual exploitation, while current victims of human trafficking are at higher risks of being further abused and exploited.”<sup>5</sup>

Gender inequality is another well documented factor around the risks to exploitation for women and girls who are disproportionately affected. According to the report published by UN Women in 2020, “72 per cent of all victims (of human trafficking) detected worldwide are female. Moreover,

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/stories/wfp-glance>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14405.doc.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/2021/trafficking-along-migration-routes-covid-related-challenges-for-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-discussed-at-meeting-of-osce-pa-ad-hoc-committee>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Trafficking/COVID-19-Impact-trafficking.pdf>

sexual exploitation is a predominant form of trafficking, with women and girls representing 94 per cent of total detected victims ... human trafficking is considered a low risk, high profit crime.”<sup>6</sup>

At the G20 Interfaith Forum in 2020 the facts and realities of modern slavery and human trafficking were discussed, along with historic responses from governments through treaties and protocols. The Policy Brief that was produced for the Forum provided a comprehensive resource around the definitions of modern slavery and human trafficking, with excellent references to academic papers and reports. It provided a focus on the areas of great concern and recognition of the “growing global demand for cheap goods and commercial sex,” and looked at the situation as the world moved forward into the Covid 19 pandemic, as the effects of the virus and the economic impact were taking shape. (<https://www.g20interfaith.org/modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking/>). There is no need to reproduce such a paper for 2021, for the majority of the facts and information remain the same.

In reality, too little progress has been made in the reduction and eradication of human trafficking and modern slavery over the past decade and more. There are thousands of charitable non-profit organisations developing and delivering a myriad of outreach, awareness, prevention and support projects, touching every corner of the world, which deserve recognition for their achievements, yet this violation of human rights and serious crime is growing, abuse and exploitation continue to ruin lives, huge profits flow into the pockets of criminals and multinational companies, while perpetrators act with impunity in their cruel control of men, women and children, while conviction rates remain discouragingly low.

Perhaps this is now a good opportunity for all actors, and observers of this work to think beyond the facts and figures, the existing protocols and policies if we are to see and be part of bringing about significant, transformative change.

### **Our Faith must Influence Our Actions**

In 2020 at the G20 Interfaith Forum the work of civil society and religious groups was highlighted, and as the Policy Brief stated, “with their long tradition of providing education, healthcare, and social services, particularly to migrants, women, and other vulnerable populations, religious institutions help strengthen community structures that should serve as bulwarks against modern slavery. At the same time, faith leaders are often a trusted resource for victims of trafficking, who commonly confide in them as a first step in seeking help.”<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the world, from cities to rural villages, places of worship have been used for sanctuary and safety for centuries. These are the spaces where every person should feel free, cared for and loved. Religious leaders have a significant role to play in the ensuring the spiritual health and well-

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/guidance-addressing-emerging-human-trafficking-trends-and-consequences-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5216>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.g20interfaith.org/modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking/>

being of their congregations and communities, and they have an important voice that must be heard to protect and advocate for the poor, weak and vulnerable.

As we move on to a 'new normal' and resume worldwide activities including travel, business and leisure, we should also be considering a radical new approach to fight this evil, where we refocus on the rights of humanity and challenge how rule of law itself can be discriminatory in our nations. We should take time to consider our motives for being involved in such a turbulent and difficult agenda. As people of faith and good will, we have an important role to play in influencing action in our communities, nations and throughout the globe. No matter what our religious affiliations may be, or none, there are many examples from our religious books and other teachings that we are taught and instructed to follow. We are told to work towards justice, to love our neighbours and fellow human beings, to value each life, and to alleviate suffering and defend the oppressed.

Our actions are more important than our words, and we have the opportunity now to not only reach out to rescue, support and care for victims of exploitation, but to challenge without compromise the systems and practices that still dominate and control the lack of progress against this crime. National and international action is necessary in developing and implementing appropriate policies, processes and procedures.

National governments and statutory agencies, the Council of Europe, European Union, the OSCE, OAS, OECD, African Union, ASEAN, the UN and others have important responsibilities in leading the fight on the world stage. We are not all working or involved at these levels, but each one of us has a role to play, for local action will also make a difference! By understanding the facts and identifying the realities of exploitation within our communities, we can act to implement policies and procedures, to scale up empowering assistance to survivors, to address the demand that drives all forms of this crime. Identification and support for victims should also have a local focus, where local authorities and agencies should be given the resources to provide that support. Faith groups have a key role to play in assisting with practical care that survivors of exploitation need, whether providing a safe place to stay, befriending services and a welcome into a community of the church, synagogue, mosque and other places of worship. Houses of worship and faith-based charities have a significant role in the moral priority to help found survivors to thrive in dignity (shelter, medical care, trauma therapy, legal remedy, training and job placement)

### **Protocols, Conventions and Goals**

The human trafficking agenda has been a subject of international debate for more than 20 years. In 2000 the United Nations agreed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol)<sup>8</sup>. The USA introduced the Trafficked Victims Protection Act Public Law (No: 115-393)<sup>9</sup>, which brought about the establishment of the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, along with the appointment of the US Trafficking in Persons Ambassador. This office annually publishes the TIP

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocol> traffickinginpersons.aspx

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/115/plaws/publ393/PLAW-115publ393.pdf>

Report, which grades national responses in the actions taken against human trafficking, identifying countries performing significantly below expectations classified as tier 3, who then face potential sanctions for inadequate efforts.

In 2005 the Council of Europe introduced its own Convention,<sup>10</sup> setting out the framework and legislation European nations should adopt to combat human trafficking. The Convention includes guidance on the role of governments, law enforcement, border agencies, children's services, prosecutors and non-government agencies. This Convention places great importance on the protection and support for victims and the non-punishment principle and non-refoulement as required in the 1951 Refugee Convention. The Council of Europe established a Group of Experts (GRETA) who conduct periodic reviews and publish reports of member states compliance with the Convention. In 2015 the United Nations agreed to the 15-year strategy of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, (SDGs), including target 8.7 to eradicate modern slavery by 2030, and the worst forms of child labour and child soldiers by 2025<sup>11</sup>.

The multilateral conventions and protocols have seen most UN nations introduce domestic legislation criminalising human trafficking, but few are yet to provide real support for victims and even where they do, implementation of measures is insufficient. At the same time convictions of perpetrators remain unacceptably low, making impunity the order of the day. The international definition of this crime states:

*“Trafficking in human beings shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”<sup>12</sup>(United Nations).*

*“Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs,”<sup>13</sup> (Article 4 Council of Europe Convention).*

## **Root Causes and Realities**

Globally, we need to drive out the drivers and causes of the tragedy of human trafficking and modern slavery, the greed and money by placing a focus on radically disincentivising the profit it generates, not just pursuing the proceeds of crime. Penalties handed to multilateral businesses for data breaches run into 100's millions of dollars, while tampering with emission readings for cars brought a 2.8 billion dollar fine in the US and a series of criminal investigations in Europe. Yet,

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<sup>10</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/legislation-and-case-law-international-legislation-council-europe/council-europe-convention-action\\_en#:~:text=The%20Convention%20of%20the%20Council,prosecuting%20those%20responsible%20for%20it.](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/legislation-and-case-law-international-legislation-council-europe/council-europe-convention-action_en#:~:text=The%20Convention%20of%20the%20Council,prosecuting%20those%20responsible%20for%20it.)

<sup>11</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocoltraffickinginpersons.aspx#:~:text=\(a\)%20%22Trafficking%20in%20persons,giving%20or%20receiving%20of%20payments](https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocoltraffickinginpersons.aspx#:~:text=(a)%20%22Trafficking%20in%20persons,giving%20or%20receiving%20of%20payments)

<sup>13</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/default/files/cets\\_197.docx.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/default/files/cets_197.docx.pdf)

all too often businesses are permitted to retain profit derived from work or services at the hands of an exploited child, woman or man. This abuse is not only happening in distant lands; where children are refused the right to education by being forced to work in fields and on plantations for rubber or cocoa, women are sold into sexual exploitation or domestic servitude, individuals kidnapped and their organs removed, men are forced to work for months and years on end on fishing trawlers, on dangerous construction sites and factories with no safety equipment – they are relegated to dispensable status, less than human.

Human trafficking and modern slavery is itself a growing global pandemic where human lives are simply commodities so that money can be made:

- The 15-year-old child in Lampedusa, raped daily in connection houses in Libya to secure her passage across the Mediterranean, expecting treasures but destined to a life of exploitation, generating enormous sums for criminals at every stage.
- The mother in Nigeria whose son was killed by his traffickers, the financial payment for a false promise of work not only taking family savings, which cost him his life.
- The fisherman in Ireland, kept on board a vessel despite being injured, receiving little or no pay and subject to racial taunts and threats.
- The British girl trafficked at the age of 14, traded as a commodity for sexual gratification by British men.
- Children in mines excavating mica for cosmetics and pearlescent paint or cobalt to power the increasing demand for battery powered items, too many children's lives being destroyed and lost.
- A young man in Chennai in a brick kiln inheriting debt from his father and likely to bequeath it to his children—despite a 1976 law to liberate bonded laborers.
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All these tragedies contribute to the conservative estimate US\$150 billion this crime generates each year, yet little if anything is done to stem the flow.

It is essential that there is a high-level strategic buy-in with political will, based on effective monitoring by meaningful metrics (of incidence, patterns, and efficacy of tested policy interventions). Areas of responsibility must be placed into legislation and policy, bringing accountability across sectors, corporations and individuals. This will take determination and great leadership, placing people in the front of the queue, particularly those who are vulnerable as a new world order emerges from the COVID 19 Pandemic. It is high time that the invocation of a “victim-centred” approach match deeds to words.

### **Laying out the Challenge for Urgent Radical Change**

Facts show the number of people being exploited is increasing, prosecutions are declining, and the criminal proceeds and commercial profit remain untapped and continue to rise. Simply put, if you are a criminal, business is booming; if you are a business owner, costs are going down; and if you are a victim, you are largely without support. Organised crime groups are outwitting the authorities, and current legislation and protocols are failing to meet the challenge.

Action and sanctions (on perpetrators, complicit officials, business enablers, and states sponsoring trafficking or flagrantly neglecting response and remedy) are needed now, so that the ambition in working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and especially SDG 8.7 will be successful.

To have a real impact to end modern slavery and human trafficking on an international level, six specific and focused areas of action and understanding should be adopted globally.

### **Six Areas of Focus**

- 1. Government procurement and business transactions** are subject to a legally binding 'no human trafficking transparency framework.' Taxpayers' money must never be used to fund this crime, nor must business models be allowed to look the other way in wilful blindness. This should be an overriding priority of the G20 as guardians of 85% of the world's economy and 75% of the world's population.

Governments must honour their commitments to international agreements, domestic legislation and commitments to their taxpayers, and develop this response directly linked with achieving the SDG's. This will take intervention at strategic levels including G20, G7, EU and UN. Interventions should be established directly with likeminded governments but also with association to multilateral bodies. The concept of removing slavery from supply chains and business models must be transferred into legal instruments in boardrooms. While sanction and remedy should be legally required of corporations, the UK, Australian, and California laws requiring reporting on mitigation of trafficking in supply chains should be replicated, scaled and sharpened as models – as an inducement to race toward transparency and crowding out slavery among publicly reporting competitors. The use and promotion of current models such as the U.S. Tariff Act 1930 and the French Due Diligence legislation are very important.

- 2. A notion of 'tainted money' is to be established.** Thereby, financial benefit/profit from modern slavery or human trafficking must be surrendered or can be seized for reparation or to assist in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking, particularly for supporting victim recovery.

Tainted money means profit that is associated with human trafficking or modern slavery. For example, the profit of a supermarket where goods are made or produced at the hands of trafficked people within the supply chain 1'000s of miles away, or profit made by the landlord of a building where trafficked women are exploited. Its regular invocation would serve to change social, corporate and legal norms for the good and drive prevention. This term would become widespread, and act as the first step to identifying modern slavery in everyday environments, and create governance like fire regulations, health and safety rules or civil engineering building standards.

- 3. The internet must become a modern slavery and trafficking 'free zone' by legal instrument.**



Frequency of ordering children online for live exploitation is significantly increasing. As the 5G role out begins, this is an ideal and morally imperative juncture to introduce requirements both contractually and legally to prevent these activities and other forms of trafficking that are enabled or procured online. The Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) and Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) in the United States are models to replicate and deepen. In brief, the rules of the actual highways must be introduced into the virtual highway at all levels of systems and platform providers and the introduction of specific offences for permitting trafficking or associated offences online. Allowing online promotion of human trafficking and modern slavery under the pretext of “freedom of expression” must cease.

#### **4. International instruments must be translated into policy and action for the modern day.**

It has been estimated that between 1815 and 1957 some 300 international agreements were implemented to suppress slavery. In recent years, over 100 countries have implemented new legislation and the Palermo Protocol was brought into being in 2000, yet none of these have been effective in bringing about systemic, despite the International Courts of Justice ruling,<sup>14</sup>

Slavery, slave-related practices, and forced labour constitute:

- a) A “war-crime” when committed by a belligerent against the nationals of another belligerent.
- (b) A “crime against humanity” when committed by public officials against any person irrespective of circumstances and diversity of nationality.
- (c) A common international crime when committed by public officials or private persons against any person.

Nations must become proficient in protection of victims, the pursuit of perpetrators and implementation of prevention policies to reflect international commitments and where they are failing, identified sanctions should be more actively and routinely employed.

#### **5. Greater engagement of the influence of multilateral bodies is crucial.**

Leadership of bodies such as the WHO, ICC, WFP, World Bank, OECD, OCHA and the Security Council need to place greater emphasis on policy development for human trafficking and modern slavery prevention. As global influencers and leaders of economies, rule of law, humanitarian aid, healthcare and development, multilateral entities are pivotal in bringing about preventative and operational measures to end modern slavery and human trafficking from everyday life in developed and developing nations.

#### **6. The ‘moral compass’ needs to be reset – people before profit or self-gratification.**

Dehumanization for profit or pleasure must be seen as intolerable in national and global society. Leaders in all disciplines; political, faith, business, government, education and civil society must be educated and brought together to understand how current models allow this crime to permeate in our society. Reversing current trends is essential.

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<sup>14</sup> [0244536.fm \(ohchr.org\)](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press/docs/2018020244536_fm.pdf) Abolishing Slavery and its Contemporary Forms

The drive to achieve the eradication of modern slavery must be attributed as a change in the moral compass of global leadership. Migrant workers' rights and the removal of recruitment fees must be recognised. A system to disrupt the financial models that feed off modern slavery and the acceptance of a moral duty must be adopted. Then, there should be an acknowledgement of how vital this work is to reduce exploitation, inequality and the globalisation of indifference.

### **In Closing**

We need to push for the prohibition of commercial profit from human trafficking and modern slavery, to see the stripping profits to provide reparation and fund the fight. This can be a real driver for a change in moral leadership, one where humans are no longer a commodity for sale and exploitation as it will require positive action, for example as in data protection, security against terrorism and many other global governance rules we accept in our daily lives. The overriding principle must focus on the causes and drivers, with an aim to revert criminal money to finances for good, redirecting the US\$150 billion with urgency and increasing responsibility and accountability.

As stewards of this world we have the responsibility to care for the climate, the marginalised and those in need, as 'the least of these'. We are taught through our religious traditions and teachings that we are all equal and should stand up against evil and injustice. It takes so much more than words. We have to find the courage and other likeminded, committed and compassionate people who will stand up without seeking the spotlight for themselves, to shine the light on those in the darkest places of pain, fear and desperation.