

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT SPECIAL EVENT: GIVING VOICE TO VICTIMS AND
SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING
New York, 22 October 2009**

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I thank the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for making today's event possible.

Above all, I am grateful to the people who have suffered from trafficking and who are here to speak out. They are much more than victims or even survivors – they are champions of truth and justice. I salute their resilience and courage.

Today's event focuses on their voices. Their testimony and ideas will shed a powerful light on this problem. A light that will expose terrible abuses ... and illuminate our way forward as we join forces to end this crime.

Human trafficking injures, traumatizes and kills individuals. It devastates families and threatens global security.

And it involves abhorrent practices, including debt bondage, forced labour, torture, organ removal, sexual exploitation and slavery-like conditions.

Traffickers deny victims their fundamental rights, including freedom of movement and freedom from abuse as well as access to health, education and a decent living.

Our fight against human trafficking is guided by three Ps: prevention, protection and prosecution.

We must also empower victims. They need support systems, information and education. They need viable ways to earn a living.

They also need criminal justice systems to pursue traffickers, and subject them to serious penalties. Conviction rates in most countries are microscopic compared to the scope of the problem. But when States help victims, the victims can help States break up trafficking networks.

Human trafficking touches on many issues, from health and human rights to development and peace and security. Our response must be equally broad, and must tackle this challenge at its roots.

We must also recognize that the global economic crisis is making the problem worse. Jobs and food are getting scarcer. Social exclusion is on the rise, making minorities and women especially vulnerable. As people leave their homes, pushed by difficult conditions and pulled by hopes for a better life elsewhere, we must remain vigilant.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The stories we will hear today highlight the importance of a rights-based response to human trafficking.

Let us heed this call to action.

Let us recall the words of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, which calls for parties to “alleviate the factors that make persons, especially women and children, vulnerable to trafficking, such as poverty, underdevelopment and lack of equal opportunity”.

I look forward to working more closely with all of you in saving individuals from traffickers and rescuing whole societies from this crime.

Thank you.