

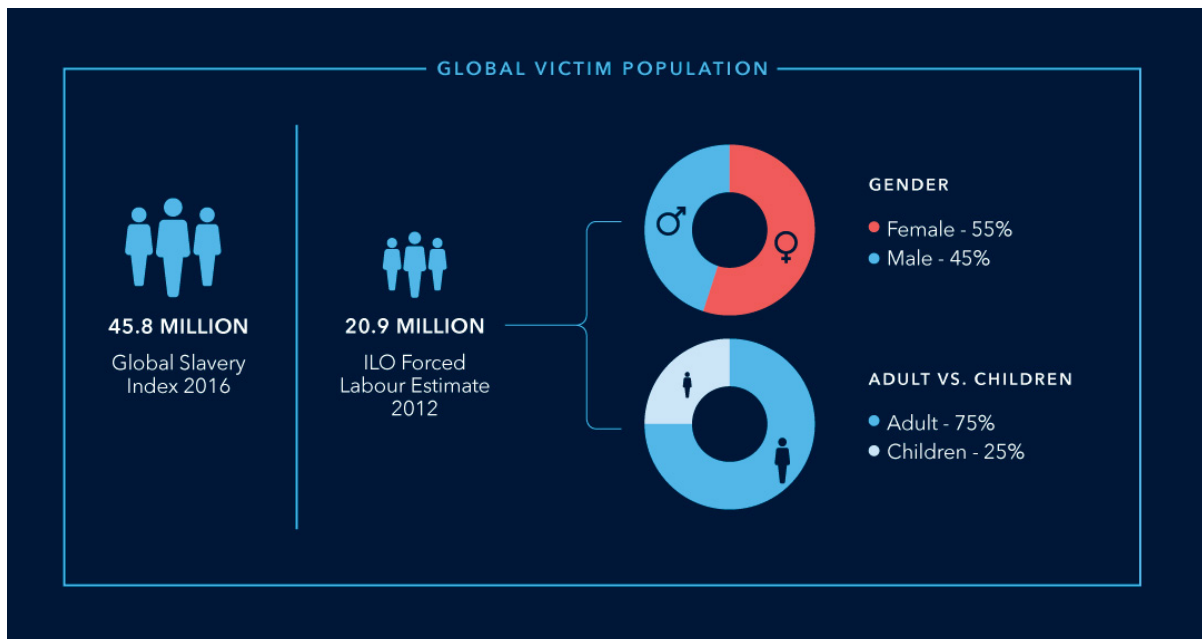
The Next UN Secretary-General Should Make Ending Slavery a Cornerstone of Their Mandate

A RECOMMENDATION TO THE 2016 UNSG CANDIDATES

Slavery is endemic in our modern world, and strategic global leadership is required if we are to combat it.

Ending slavery and human trafficking remains one of the great challenges of our time – currently between 20.9 and 45.8 million people are estimated to be enslaved across the globe. Yet, the topic has largely remained a side issue within the United Nations, and has barely been mentioned in the mission statements of the current UN Secretary-General candidates.

The next five years present a historic opportunity for the United Nations' incoming Secretary-General to set a global agenda to eliminate, once and for all, the worst forms of exploitation. Slavery cuts to the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the global human rights agenda, with its links to both international security and environmental degradation being increasingly exposed. Ending modern slavery lies at the core of the UN's mission and objectives.



There has never been greater momentum in the global fight to end slavery than today.

- The UN has set a robust target to end forced labour, slavery and human trafficking in SDG 8.7, and in 2014 world faith leaders came together to reaffirm their commitment to this goal.
- Amongst member states, national governments have passed legislation designed to curb trafficking and forced labour, particularly in business supply chains.
- Global businesses are increasingly engaged, ever more aware of the dangers of modern slavery and the risk of its presence in their supply chains.

Political and faith leaders, along with growing social movements across the world, are now adding millions of voices to the call to end slavery in our time. Given this growing momentum, the explicit engagement of the Secretary-General could prove hugely impactful should the Office, and the UN's intergovernmental agencies more generally, make integrated action against modern slavery and human trafficking a central focus of their work.

WHAT THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL CAN DO:

The next UN Secretary-General has a historic opportunity to enlist the full force of UN agencies in the fight against modern slavery by encouraging greater cohesion and coordination, and mobilizing significant political will.

As governments around the world backslide on their human rights commitments, the fight against modern slavery is one of the very few global human rights battles today making tangible progress. Here, a new Secretary-General could make a pivotal difference, building upon the work of an active movement and a groundswell of public support.

To tackle slavery head-on, the UN Secretary-General should:

1. Make combatting slavery and human trafficking one of the key areas of focus for the Office of the Secretary-General over the next five years.
2. Appoint a time-bound Special Envoy tasked with mainstreaming UN system-wide action against modern slavery.
 - Such an envoy could speak and act across the whole UN system, and would have much stronger access to external partners, such as the World Bank and high level business actors, than the human rights-focused Special Rapporteur.
3. Task the Envoy with developing effective supply chain measures to ensure that legitimate businesses do not unwittingly engage in slavery or encourage human trafficking from conflict zones.
 - These could draw on lessons learnt from the corporate due-diligence guidelines on conflict minerals, as well as recent legislation and regulation in some member states on supply chain transparency.
4. Task the Envoy with developing system-wide thematic guidance, engaging with the private sector and civil society, and developing a proposal for a Global Partnership to End Modern Slavery by 2017.
 - A Global Partnership could help coordinate efforts to protect global supply chains against slavery by creating roadmaps to help both states and global retailers undertake reforms.

The UN Security Council should be encouraged to take robust steps, including:

1. Properly labelling the widespread and systematic policy of human trafficking in conflict a crime against humanity.
2. Convening an open thematic debate to explore the links between enslavement and threats to international peace and security.
3. Requesting that the Secretary-General report annually on system-wide efforts to end modern slavery.

WHAT SLAVERY IS AND WHY IT PERSISTS:

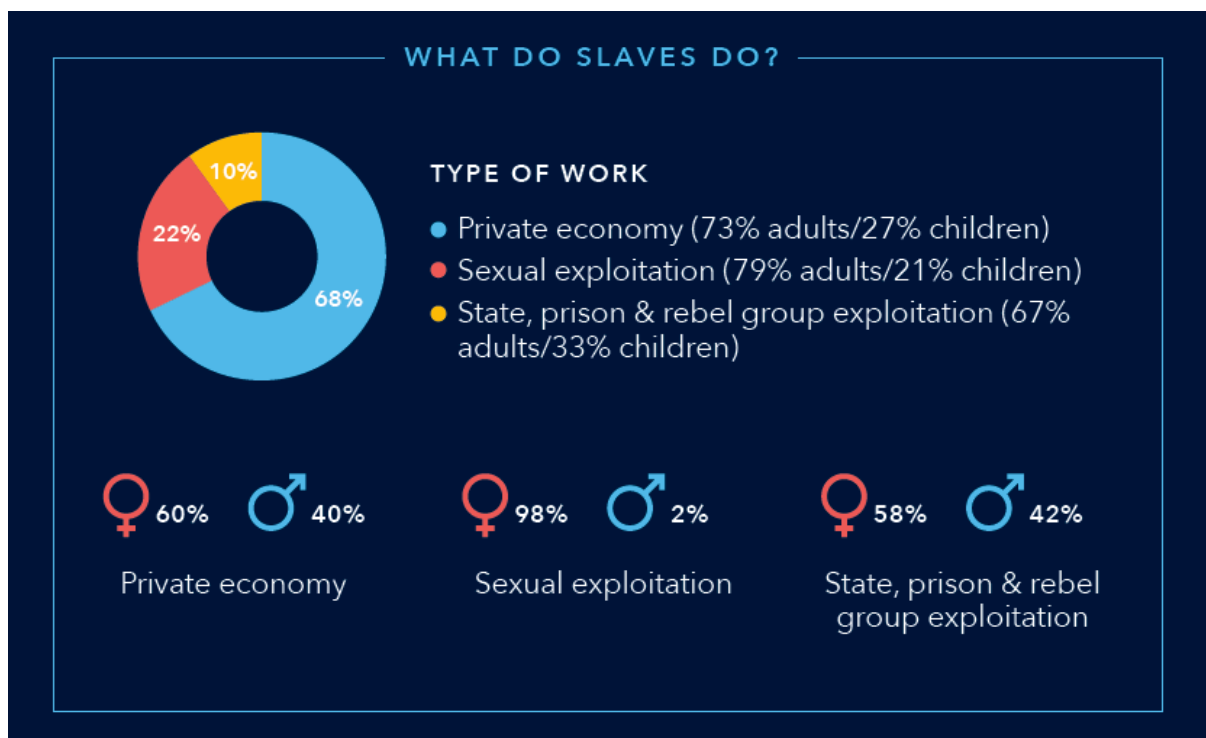
Slavery is banned in every country. Yet despite this, human trafficking not only persists but in many states is flourishing, arising from social exclusion, income shocks, low educational levels, state instability, corruption, or insecure immigration status.

Slavery is complex and in many regions entrenched, and it will need a cohesive, strategic, and coordinated final push to secure its extinction.

These conditions, where people have their most basic freedoms denied and are used, controlled and exploited by another for commercial or personal gain, are all too common.

The tens of millions of people trapped in modern slavery today are deprived of their voices. As such, slavery remains a hidden crime, with its cruelty and abuses enacted behind closed doors, in remote regions, or down the backstreets of the world's cities.

Slaves are found not only in the ISIS-run slave markets of Iraq and Syria, but also in the Thai fishing fleets that supply our supermarkets, the South Asian cotton mills that produce our clothes, and the Congolese mines that supply minerals to make the world's smartphones.

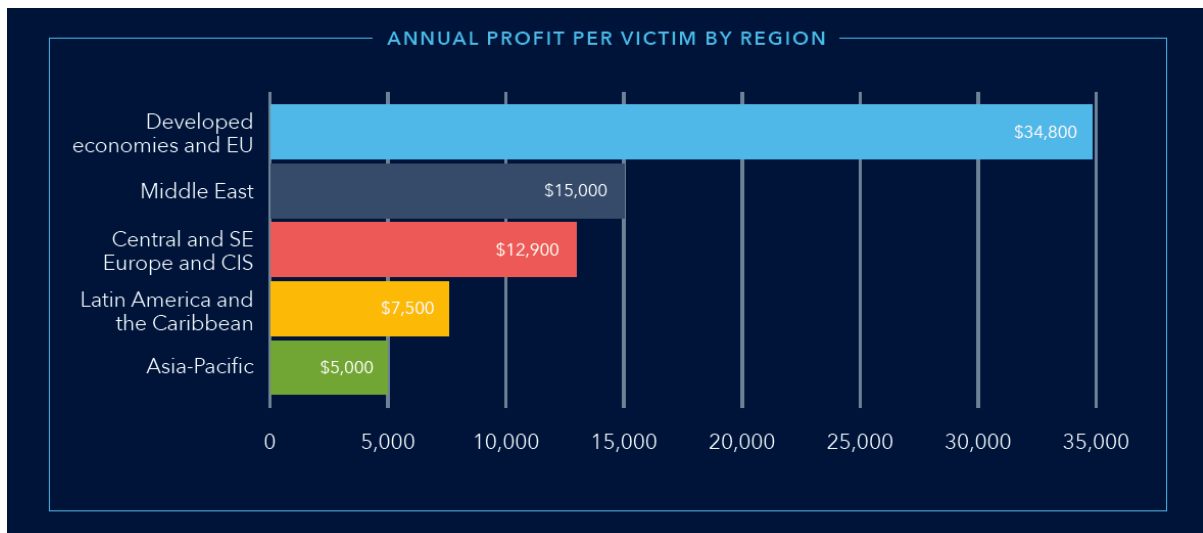


SLAVERY UNDERMINES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Slavery shackles development, imposing significant costs on communities and states. Fighting this crime is not only moral; it is smart development policy. While criminals and illicit networks profit from slavery, the world pays the price in decreased productivity, lost tax revenue, and squandered human capital.

The International Labour Organisation has recently estimated that slavery generates some \$150 billion annually in the criminal economy.

Slavery not only causes horrific suffering to its victims, but has a corrosive impact on the wider health of our economies and communities. Ending it not only extinguishes a gross injustice; it also enables people to contribute freely to their communities, creating greater prosperity for our world.



WHAT IS BEING DONE TO END SLAVERY TODAY:

Exceptional anti-slavery work by actors ranging from UN agencies to frontline NGOs is underway across the globe, making extinction a real possibility. But thus far efforts have been fragmented, and what they possess in commitment and energy they lack in coordination. There has been a notable lack of clear political leadership at the international level.

In September 2015 the international community adopted the SDGs, including Goal 8.7 in which the world's leaders committed to ending slavery by 2030.

In December, the UN Security Council held its first ever debate on human trafficking, focusing on the ways in which armed conflict and its concurrent massive displacement of civilians leaves people especially vulnerable to the most extreme forms of exploitation.

The outcome was a presidential statement that, among other things, called for the UN Secretary-General to report back within a year on efforts to end trafficking in conflict. This put anti-slavery efforts firmly on the international agenda and, here onward, should give serious impetus to a range of anti-slavery efforts at the UN and beyond.

THE NEED FOR MULTILATERAL ACTION:

Slavery is universally condemned among states, and the anti-slavery movement has secured a groundswell of support among the world's national populations and leaders.

In adopting the SDGs, states pledged to leave no one behind. Action against modern slavery will be essential to fulfilling the world's promise.

Yet most interventions – whether led by the UN, member states or NGOs – have failed to address the global systemic issues and supply chain challenges that allow slavery to thrive. They are often haphazardly funded, and hampered by fragmentation and poor coordination. Nor have they robustly engaged with businesses and corporations.

Existing multilateral action has made significant inroads, but the UN now needs to take decisive and unified action.

At the UN, the Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which is tasked with the promotion and implementation of the UN Trafficking Protocol, has been a major source of innovation, knowledge and capacity-building assistance on trafficking both at the international level and for individual Member States. The ILO has contributed similarly in the area of forced labour and remains a forceful promoter of respect for anti-slavery norms. But given the scale and persistence of slavery, these two agencies alone cannot hope to significantly reduce its prevalence.

Slavery is ripe for engagement, and the position of UN Secretary-General offers a unique platform to drive decisive multilateral action that could help free the world's most oppressed and vulnerable.

The UN has an important leadership role to play in ending modern slavery, and all parts of the UN system need to work more effectively together to help countries and businesses alike tackle exploitation. The world needs stronger multilateral action through the UN General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, Security Council, and by regional organisations, businesses, and civil society.

Only with true global leadership can we hope to end modern slavery by 2030.