

# Anti-Slavery Charter

*“Slavery does not merely mean a legalised form of subjection. It means a state of society in which some [human beings] are forced to accept from others the purposes which control their conduct” - B.R. Ambedkar*

6 July 2017

In 2012 the International Labour Organization estimated that there were a minimum of 21 million people in forced labour across the world. In 2013 they estimated that there were 168 million children worldwide, almost 11 % of the child population of the world, in child labour.

Slavery, forced labour and child labour persist in the world because they are permitted to exist. Research by Anti-Slavery International, the world’s oldest international human rights organisation, and others, has shown that ending these human rights abuses depends on changing fundamentally the way we, as a society, set the laws, policies, customs and practices that govern how we establish and conduct employment, trade and development.

Given this we, the undersigned, recognise that fundamental changes are necessary to tackle and eliminate slavery. In order to empower those vulnerable to slavery and to transform exploitative practices into decent work, it is necessary to close the gaps in laws, policies and practices that allow the unscrupulous to exploit and enslave other human beings with impunity. To achieve this it is necessary to ensure the universal application of established legal, social, economic and human rights principles that, in combination, can to properly address slavery and its underlying causes.

**We therefore commit ourselves to support the full realisation of the following measures:**

- **Rule of law shall be assured**

National and international systems of rule of law must be established and enforced that protects the human rights of all, which must be administered without fear or favour by a sufficient number of properly trained judges and a similar, professional police force to ensure that the promise of the laws to protect is not an empty one.

- **Discrimination shall be prohibited**

States, businesses and civil society must take meaningful measures to eradicate dehumanising and discriminatory practices from every section of society and to ensure true equality before the law.

**States**

- **National legislation shall criminalise all forms of slavery**

National governments, in keeping with international law, must enact and enforce a comprehensive legal framework that specifically criminalise all forms of slavery and define appropriately prohibitory sanctions for perpetrators.

- **... shall protect individuals from slavery**

Particular attention should be given to measures to protect victims of slavery practices during legal process and prevent the unjust criminalisation of individuals for actions they are forced to commit as a direct consequence of their slavery or exploitation, in keeping with international law. Adequate support and protection, including access to alternative livelihoods, must be provided to victims of slavery.

- **... and shall advance access to decent work**

There must be a sufficient and coherent body of law to establish, and realise, minimum criteria for decent working conditions and protection from exploitation, irrespective of the nature of the work, or social opinions regarding that work.

- **Vulnerable Workers**

Particular attention should be paid to the specific needs of disadvantaged groups or individuals, such as women, children, migrants, people affected by disability, and people affected by caste discrimination, to achieve equal access and treatment.

- **Freedom of Association shall be guaranteed**

Constraints on establishing democratic trades unions must be removed and the rights of workers and human rights activists to free association upheld.

- **Immigration law and policy which maintains or increases an individuals' vulnerability to exploitation and slavery shall be prohibited**

No visa should ever be tied, either explicitly or for all practical purposes, to a specific job or employer. Workers must be able to leave a job or employer without fear of sanction, and they must be entitled to leave a country without fear of criminal or civil penalty for doing simply that.

- **The rights of children shall be upheld**

Measures must be enacted to uphold the rights of children and protect them from child labour and enslavement, including sexual exploitation, forced child begging and domestic servitude. In particular all nations must ensure universal access to quality and appropriate education up to the age of 18, particularly for girls, for groups vulnerable to slavery, and for communities where child labour is endemic.

- **Forced marriage shall be prohibited**

All nations must put in place, and implement, laws, policies and effective law enforcement to bring all forms of forced marriage, in particular forced child marriage, to an end.

### **Humanitarian and Development Actors**

- **Slavery is a fundamental issue of poverty**

Humanitarian and development policy makers and practitioners should actively consider how their work can contribute to the reduction of slavery, and develop programmes and strategies to empower slavery vulnerable communities and individuals.

### **Business responsibilities**

- **Full transparency of national and international business supply chains shall be established and enforced**

National governments must require, and businesses must establish, transparency of corporate supply chains to identify where risks of slavery, forced and child labour are highest and to help identify the causes of these risks. States must ensure trade agreements fully protect the rights of workers and communities, establish and enforce robust national systems of professional labour inspection to identify and exclude slavery, forced and child labour from business supply chains

- **Recruitment agencies and practices shall be appropriately regulated**

Recruitment agencies, particularly those engaged in international recruitment, must be regulated to ensure that the practices of these agencies do not debt-bond or otherwise render workers vulnerable to slavery and exploitation. Businesses must, through due-diligence, ensure that any labour providers they use adhere to basic standards of human rights protections.

#### **International**

- **Goods tainted by slavery, forced and child labour shall be forbidden**

Where businesses and states have not set robust plans and processes to access and address slavery and exploitation, powers should be established and executed to exclude goods produced with slavery practices from international markets.

**We the undersigned** commit to using our power, whatever it may be, to empower those vulnerable to slavery, to advance emancipation, and to promote access to decent work.