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Trafficking in Human Beings “impossible for the Church to remain a passive spectator of events”

Leading European Church bodies review anti-trafficking work of churches

Some 100 leading representatives of churches from all over Europe met for an international conference on trafficking in human beings in Protaras/Cyprus on 8th October. The conference “Churches addressing trafficking in human beings” was organised by the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) at the opening of its 17th General Assembly. The members of the Central Committee of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) also attended the conference, which reviewed Christian commitment against trafficking in the last decade.

In his address to the conference, His Beatitude Chrysostomos, Archbishop of Nova Justiana and all Cyprus, highlighted the preoccupation of the church with combating trafficking: “Witnessing the disheartening situation (of trafficking) it is impossible for the Church to remain a passive spectator of events. ...the Church owes it to itself to struggle with all its resources to fight effectively and wipe out the phenomenon of human trafficking.”

In a reflection on a human rights framework to combat trafficking, Kent Olsson, Chairman of the Sub-Committee of trafficking in human beings of the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly, invited churches across Europe to join forces with the Council of Europe. “You should call on your governments to sign the Council of Europe Convention (on action against trafficking in human beings). For countries which have signed the convention, I would like you to monitor the correct implementation of the convention.” In a panel on national case studies, speakers from Cyprus, Romania and Italy presented examples of their churches’ involvement in combating trafficking. Two historical reviews of Christian anti-trafficking activities on European level since 1997 complemented the national presentations.

The conference considered a position paper outlining future orientations for CCME’s work on trafficking in human beings.

Doris Peschke, General Secretary of CCME, after the conference commented : “ it is unacceptable that human beings, who are created in the image of God, are treated like mere commodities. Today’s conference underlined that indeed combating trafficking in human beings is not just an option, but a biblical calling for churches in Europe”.

For further information, please contact CCME, T +32 486 575508