



**Opinion Submission**  
**Luc Stevens, Resident Coordinator**  
**On World Day against Trafficking in Persons**

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Women forced into sexual slavery. Children forced to work rather than study. Men tricked into indentured servitude on fishing vessels earning no pay and often remaining at sea for years on end. Ethnic minorities fleeing persecution and marginalisation only to find themselves exploited at the hands of those who do not value human life.

These are the faces of human trafficking. These are the people who produce cheap goods, cheap food, and cheap entertainment for us. When we turn a blind eye, wherever we may be, these are the people who suffer. And it is our collective responsibility to tackle this, one of the world's most egregious violations of human rights.

Like many countries in the region and around the world, Thailand faces significant challenges in combating human trafficking and the exploitation of human beings. This is not a story unique to this country, but one faced by many poor, developing and advanced economies. No one country can "solve" this problem. Rather, collective, coordinated responses are required. And we at the United Nations stand firmly beside those who commit to fight this modern day evil. The United Nations endeavours to see a world free from trafficking and exploitation, a world where every life matters, and where every person realises his or her inherent human right to pursue their dreams.

On this the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon shares his thoughts about human trafficking and our collective responsibility to address it effectively. He writes:

*Around the world, criminals are selling people for profit. Vulnerable women and girls form the majority of human trafficking victims, including those driven into degrading sexual exploitation.*

*Trafficked persons are often tricked into servitude with the false promise of a well-paid job. Migrants crossing deadly seas and burning deserts to escape conflict, poverty and persecution are also at risk of being trafficked. Individuals can find themselves alone in a foreign land where they have been stripped of their passports, forced into debt and exploited for labour. Children and young people can find their lives stolen, their education blocked and their dreams dashed. It is an assault on their most basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.*

*Criminal trafficking networks thrive in countries where the rule of law is weak and international cooperation is difficult. I call on all countries to fight money laundering and sign and ratify the UN Conventions against corruption and transnational organized crime, including the latter's human trafficking protocol.*

*We must also provide meaningful assistance to those in need, including protection and access to justice and remedies. I applaud the donors who have enabled the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons Fund to assist thousands of people. At the same time, I urge greater contributions to help the many million other victims of this crime move forward with their lives.*

*Every country must join together to overcome this transnational threat by supporting and protecting victims while pursuing and prosecuting the criminals. On the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, let us resolve to act as one in the name of justice and dignity for all.*



Let us all heed the Secretary-General's call to action. Whether we are government officials, civil society activists, consumers, academics, students or business people. We all have a role to play. Our actions can save lives. Let us commit ourselves to positive action for change on this day, and every day.

Luc Stevens

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