

First of all, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Luis CdeBaca on another remarkable Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report. The 2010 TIP Report has taken bold advances since the reporting process began a decade ago with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. The TIP report has become an indispensable resource in a short time, unrivaled for its comprehensive coverage. In our work at the Helsinki Commission, the findings of the report are closely integrated in our diplomatic efforts throughout Eurasia as Members of the U.S. delegation to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly.

Past experiences have shown that the effective combating of human trafficking truly requires the inter-state cooperation the TIP report helps facilitate. The OSCE also provides its 56 participating states a framework for such initiatives by supplying a forum and field missions instrumental for many countries in continuing to make progress on protecting their citizens from being exploited for labor or sex.

Given the pervasiveness of human trafficking globally, how is it that 62 countries have yet to convict a trafficker under laws in compliance with the Palermo Protocol? How can we break the cycle of trafficking when 104 countries remain without even basic laws or policies to prevent the deportation of victims? These insufficiencies leave wide open regions of complicity that keep us from liberating the over 12 million people in circumstances of modern-day slavery.

The challenges we face in eradicating human trafficking must be addressed through multilateral, government to government efforts coupled with direct action in the field. That is why I remain truly inspired by the accomplishments of the Heroes Acting to End Modern-Day Slavery acknowledged each year in the TIP Report. Of particular personal import this year, is the selection of Laura Germino of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. A fellow Floridian, Laura has fought to end the exploitation of migrant agricultural workers that persists decades after I personally witnessed it when I was a young migrant worker in Central Florida. Many agricultural laborers still encounter practices as insidious as I had seen in my youth, which rob them of their basic human rights. Unfortunately, these circumstances thrive throughout the world. We would be at a serious loss in challenging exploitation were it not for the dogged determination of heroes like Laura and the important monitoring efforts of the Trafficking in Persons Report each year.

Today's hearing will be critical in raising awareness about direct efforts to liberate those in sexual or debt bondage and see how we can improve the phenomenal efforts of the U.S. State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. We have seen marked improvement from many states in the 2010 TIP report, but those successes are juxtaposed to the inactivity of many countries which remain complacent. Many major players in geopolitical affairs remain on the Tier 2 Watch List, including a number of countries within the OSCE region. This is unacceptable.

I look forward to the remarks of our witnesses to help us make sense of the circumstances we face and help us overcome persisting challenges and trends of human trafficking. We need their guidance as we shape the future of the Trafficking in Persons Report as a global resource for human rights diplomacy.