

4th International Conference on Apparel and Home Textiles
26 September 2008

Honourable Mr. Elangovan, Honourable Minister of State and Textiles; Dr. Singh, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Textiles; Mr. Uppal, President, OGTC; Mr. Kesar, Director, OGTC.

On behalf of UNODC Regional Office for South Asia, I would like to thank the OGTC for giving us time to talk on the Urgency to Combat Trafficking of Women and Children in this inaugural session of the 4th International Conference of Apparel and Home Textiles.

UNODC ROSA is currently involved on a number of initiatives in partnership with the national governments, civil society partners, media and the private sector on issues of drug demand reduction; drug law enforcement and organized crime in South Asia.

We believe that it a moment to celebrate the growth story of the Indian economy in particularly that of the apparel and textile industry. According to statistics, India stands second in the global textile trade with 8% of total trade. It contributes to nearly 4% of total textile exports and 3% of total apparel export in the world.

We believe that the textile and apparel fraternity is not just the contributor to the economic growth of the country but also to the process of empowering communities in addressing several issues that relate to social developments and empowerment of human resources in India. For us it is a revelation that domestically the textile and apparel industry accounts for 14% to industrial production and 5% to the GDP.

You as the fraternity have the power to touch the lives of over 38 million people in this country, who directly benefit from the employment opportunities by creating direct employment in both the textile and the apparel industry. With each family that takes

back home remuneration for their contribution to this sector, they also bring food security as well as opportunities for the families to access other social developments facilities.

This, my friends is one of the major contributions to prevent and reduce vulnerabilities to human trafficking.

In this highly complex matrix of origin to end product and sale, you also contribute to weaving the tapestries of their lives. It is unfortunate that in this spectrum of things, unfortunately there are times when unwittingly some of our domestic manufacturers, fabricators and exporters become part of contributing to an aspect of human trafficking that they themselves may not be aware of.

It is unfortunate today that human trafficking which is one of the worst forms of human crime is an estimated 32 billion \$ illegal industry and third to illegal arms trade and drug trafficking. Over 150,000 people are trafficked within South Asia every year for sex work, labour, forced marriages, organ trade and it is often the very economic state and conditions that contribute to the vulnerabilities of young people, women and children.

- Slavery may have been abolished in most countries in the 1800s, but it still exists all over the world today in different forms.
- Human trafficking is one of these forms.

In almost every country on the planet from impoverished rural villages to mega cities, from wealthy urban paradises to inner city ghettos, hundreds of thousands of people are becoming victims of human trafficking every year through force or deception. Very simply put their lives are for sale, auctioned off to the highest bidders in a perverse commercialization of humanity these human beings are used like products and then simply thrown away.

- According to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime:
“...the purchasing, transfer, harbouring or receiving of persons by threatening, use of force, fraud or deception...” is considered to be human trafficking.

- Technical assistance provided to countries by UNODC includes:
 - > Assisting in the review and revision of domestic legislation concerning assistance to and protection of victims;
 - > Training law enforcement officials, lawyers and service providers in identifying, protecting and assisting victims of trafficking;
 - > Supporting countries in providing medical, psychological and social assistance to victims, also in conjunction with NGOs and civil society;
 - > Securing the safety and protection of victims;

- UNODC undertakes prevention and awareness-raising activities to:
 - inform potential victims of the risks to which they are vulnerable.
 - provide victims of trafficking with information regarding the services and support available to them.

Dear friends I invite you to join us in the mission to fight human trafficking in India. We know that as a responsible and a responsive industry you have the means and the mechanisms to influence your supply chain systems that have zero tolerance to human trafficking.

We believe that you can help us in empowering women to develop effective skills and become a skilled work force that can contribute to the apparel and garment industry.

You can also help us by adopting NGOs and shelter homes for victims of human trafficking. Your contribution in creating awareness and alerts in the community will go a long way in reducing risk and vulnerabilities, early detection and identification of victims and traffickers.

We firmly believe in the power of the apparel sector with over 25,000 domestic manufacturers; 48,000 fabricators and over 4000 exporters to change the face of issues of human trafficking. We collectively can become our own conscious keepers and community mobilisers to ensure that some bad eggs do not spoil the basket of the glory that is due to this very vibrant and dynamic sector.