

**PRESS RELEASE OF 30<sup>th</sup> March 2006**

## **Churches in Europe called to combat all forms of modern slavery**

*New phase of Christian anti-trafficking network looks at new challenges in combating human trafficking*

**Some 60 representatives of the churches, governments, police, the judiciary and NGOs from 15 European countries met for an international conference and workshop on trafficking in human beings in Bucharest from March 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The workshop marked the launch of a new project phase of the European network “Christian Action and Networking against Trafficking in Women” (CAT). The network, which has been operational since 2002 and coordinated by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, will, until early 2007, look at newly emerging challenges in human trafficking and promote coordinated responses by the different stakeholders.**

The importance of continued co-operation between governmental and non-governmental actors was underlined during the official opening of the conference on March 27<sup>th</sup>, which was hosted by His Beatitude Teoctist, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, in the Patriarchate Palace. Archbishop Nifon of Targoviste, President of the local hosting organisation AIDRom, presented the organisation's experience in connecting different stakeholders for joint action. Expert speakers, such as European Parliament observer Mona Musca, stressed the need to translate existing national and international legislation against trafficking into practical action on the ground.

During the three-day workshops following the opening conference, participants discussed new challenges in the fight against trafficking in human beings as well as the continued need for understanding trafficking in a gender perspective. Particular attention was given to areas, which so far had been neglected, such as trafficking for bonded labour or domestic servitude. Representatives of police from Germany, Lithuania and Romania reported about problems and new approaches in persecuting these increasingly subtle and hidden forms of trafficking, which often work with very flexible modus operandi. Representatives of churches and specialised NGOs across Europe introduced new models of outreach and protection of trafficked persons in different contexts of exploitation. Participants in this context recalled the traditional Christian commitment against all forms of slavery, while maintaining that a gender perspective on trafficking remains central .

“The public debate around trafficking so far has mainly focused on sexual exploitation”, explained Torsten Moritz, coordinator of the CAT project. “While there is continuing need to address this area and to maintain a gender perspective, other forms of exploitation deserve more attention. Churches in Europe are called to combat all forms of modern slavery”, he added.

Participants also agreed on joint future networking activities, e.g. on linked awareness-raising activities on trafficking on the occasion of the football world cup this summer. Plans for future project activities also include a new workshop of the CAT network in Lithuania in October 2006, looking at the issue of communication tools around anti-trafficking as well as public activities in 2007, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the official abolition of the slave trade.

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