

Archbishop: Action needed to fight trafficking

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GENEVA -- Human trafficking is such a lucrative business that as soon as laws are passed to counter the practice, traffickers find new ways to continue the modern-day slave trade, a Vatican official told the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Vatican's representative to U.N. agencies in Geneva, said an estimated 3 million people fall prey to traffickers each year and their trade generates more than \$30 billion annually.

International action rallying governments, law enforcement agencies, human rights organizations, faith groups and people of good will are needed to combat human trafficking, which primarily involves poor women and children, the archbishop told the council Sept. 14.

As the world's economy has globalized, he said, so has the trade in human beings, which "exploits the extreme poverty and vulnerability of many women and minors who try to escape intolerable conditions of misery and violence."

Lured by the hope of jobs and a better life, they become "bonded to their masters as slaves with passports and personal documents seized and a sense of identity destroyed," he said.

Governments have enacted laws to counter human trafficking and many organizations, particularly coalitions of Catholic nuns, are working hard to educate potential victims and rescue those who have fallen into the hands of traffickers, he said.

But more must be done to eliminate the demand for prostitution and to strengthen a culture where the relationship between men and women is based on mutual "respect and not on merchandizing the body," he said.

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