



Marking a decade since the creation of the Athens Ethical Principles, 'Action 2030: Ending Modern Slavery Together' invites businesses to sign up to the principles committing them to eradicate human trafficking and slavery throughout their entire supply chain.

Jointly organised by the Diocese of Derby and the International Policing and Justice Institute at Derby University, the event was hosted by Professor Kevin Brampton.

The Archbishop addressed business leaders on exploited workers and humanitarian responsibility, and encouraged them to become ambassadors against slavery, in support of the work of the Bishop of Derby - a long-time champion of the fight against modern day slavery - who has played a vital role in drafting the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Read the Archbishop's remarks at the event:

We tend to operate in local areas. We don't get the global picture and I think what really struck me about David's speech is that he saw it in all the different areas and that was particularly striking and important because unless we bring them all together, we won't be able to tackle it.

I think that our present environment and culture makes it difficult to take on this issue in the public eye. One of the conversations that I learnt a great deal from this morning, the penny dropped, was the overlap between trafficking and slavery and immigration.

Whatever happens today in the referendum, the last few weeks have caused enormous insecurities to immigrants of all kinds. To refugees, to asylum seekers, to immigrants coming from across Europe. I think it has been, some of the language used, some of the posters used and I've commented on this elsewhere, have been deeply damaging to our view of the dignity of the human person and whatever the outcome of today's vote is, there is a huge recovery operation to say to people that they are human beings with exactly the same dignities as everyone else in this country.

One of the ways that shows up especially is the confusion between people who are trafficked and people who have entered the country illegally. One of the things that we were discussing early this morning in a meeting which as I say the penny dropped in my mind, was how you distinguish between victims and perpetrators. Is this person a criminal by committing a crime by entering this country illegally or are they a victim who has been trafficked in and used as a slave?

If we demonise immigrants, then we will not be able to make that distinction and the danger of that is huge because by their very nature, people caught up in modern slavery are those who the life of human dignity has been temporarily extinguished.

They are being treated as a commodity, as a thing, not as a human being. And, our response to the extinction of that light of human dignity is one of the key measures of what kind of civilised society we are in this country.

The other side of the coin which is so good is that this country has played a leading role over many years now but particularly since the Modern Slavery Act in recent years, in combatting slavery, our history on combatting slavery is actually rather good, you talk to the newspaper about Lord Mansfield's case, that famous case where English Lords does not recognise the institution of slavery in England.

We all know about Wilberforce, but after the Napoleonic war in the 1820s, it was the Royal Navy that led the great campaign against the slave trade across the Atlantic. We have a long history of this. It is a history that we need to hold on to and to celebrate and to continue and develop. David in his really memorable speech used one phrase that really struck me and it comes back to the Athens declaration.

It's quite easy to know what we are going to do. We're going to abolish modern slavery by 2030, whatever it happens to be. But what we're going to do now – which was his question when he was sitting at his desk – what we're going to do now is always the hardest question to ask, because it actually commits us to action where we are and where we stand at this particular moment.

He demonstrated very clearly the importance of the collaboration of business, of statutory agencies, especially with police of course, and of the voluntary sector and civil society especially the churches.

The churches know a certain amount about modern slavery and have been very involved in combatting it because we are in many places.

The Anglican Communion is in 165 countries. We have 38 provinces around the world, the vast majority of Anglicans are overseas, over 85% of them, and in those 38 provinces we have a total of around about 1,000 bishops. And, in those 1,000 dioceses we have goodness knows about 40,000 to 60,000 parishes with parish priests who tend to know their local area.

It is an unrivalled intelligence network. The Roman Catholic Church is larger by a multiple of at least 15. That's a huge number of people to find out information, to be energised and motivated to combat this evil. That's why our partnership, under the leadership of Bishop Alastair – he very politely said he does it for me; actually he does it because he's so deeply committed to it and his leadership in this area has been enormously striking... but our partnership in this is something that is one of our top priorities, because it draws on our global network in the most extraordinary way and on the 85 million Anglicans around the world.

So what are we going to do now? In the Church of England we're preparing a project, led by Bishop Alastair, to resource dioceses and parishes on the things we've heard about – spotting slavery and servitude and working out how to respond to it effectively. That's what we're doing in this country. We're going to mobilise the network much more effectively than we have done in the past.

At a global level, we will continue to work hard with other churches and with governments against this scourge. We're going to be working with the Nigerians more effectively than we have been. They're deeply worried by this, deeply upset by it, and they need support in combating it – as do we.

We're going to develop our partnerships more effectively than we have done. One of the first ways through that is by being involved in the signing of the Athens Declaration, and supporting businesses signing the Athens Ethical Principles. And I'm so very pleased that the businesses here are going to do that a bit later.

We're also now much more effectively using the very large investment funds that the church has, through its pension funds and so on, to put pressure on companies that are not paying attention to their supply chains. As you know, there are still quite a few and – as you pointed out extremely clearly – not only are there quite a few, but the business of auditing the supply chain is much more complicated than it looks, particularly for large complex companies.

The last thing that we're particularly working on now is building partnerships in every part of the world where we are – which is most parts. Because one of the things that's been re-emphasised to me this morning is that partnership working is the only way of tackling this effectively.

Finally, I was particularly struck by something I knew already from the 19th century but hadn't connected with today. One of the reasons that the anti-slave trade legislation got through in the early part of the 19th century, and the emancipation of slavery within the British Empire in the 1830s, came back to the fact economically that it didn't pay – that it wasn't a cheap form of labour – as well as Wilberforce's incredible work over his entire lifetime to change the culture. The two came together: people said, 'This is wrong, and moreover, it's stupid.' It's wrong and it's stupid is quite a powerful argument.

Slave labour, as we heard today, is not cheap. I think that's one of the key things to take away from this morning. It is stupid, as well as being wrong. It increases the risk profile of businesses and makes them more vulnerable to breakdowns in their supply chain – as well as damaging their reputation extraordinarily severely.

I feel deeply privileged to have been involved in this process. In the autumn I'm going to be seeing Pope Francis again, and I've no doubt that this will be at the top of the agenda. It is every time we meet. And early next year I'm co-sponsoring a conference in Istanbul with the Ecumenical Patriarch – the head of the Orthodox Church – whose area covers the whole of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and is therefore very significant.

We are deeply committed to the churches – not just the Anglican Communion – working together on this programme. You've heard about the meetings coming up in Abu Dhabi. This is a genuinely global response to a global problem. What we intend to try and mobilise more effectively – and continue to mobilise – is the fact that we are also global, regional and local.

It's a privilege to be in partnership with the University of Derby, with the people here and to be involved in one of the great causes of our lifetime.

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