APPG on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

AGM and Roundtable

13th July 2016, House of Lords Committee Room 3

AGM

Present:

Fiona Mactaggart MP (Co-Chair)
Baroness Butler-Sloss (Co-Chair)
Vernon Coaker MP
Baroness Young of Hornsey
Stephen Timms MP
Lord Hunt of Wirral
Jess Phillips MP
Mark Durkan MP
Bishop of Derby
Lord Purvis of Tweed
Anthony Steen (Special Advisor)
Euan Fraser (HTF Secretariat)

AGM Officer Elections:

Fiona Mactaggart explained that all current officers of the APPG had expressed their desire to be re-elected to their positions and that Corri Wilson MP has expressed her desire to be appointed to Vice-Chair.

Lord Hunt proposed the re-election of all officers to their existing positions and the election of Corri Wilson as Vice-Chair, seconded by Vernon Coaker, as follows:

Commons Co-Chair - Fiona Mactaggart MP
Lords Co-Chair - Baroness Butler-Sloss
Vice-Chair - Jess Phillips MP
Vice-Chair - David Burrowes MP
Vice-Chair – Corri Wilson MP
Treasurer - Mark Durkan MP
Secretary - Maggie Throup MP

All officers were unanimously elected.

Baroness Butler-Sloss proposed the appointment of Anthony Steen as Special Advisor to the APPG. Seconded by Lord Hunt.

Baroness Butler-Sloss proposed the appointment of the Human Trafficking Foundation as secretariat to the APPG. Seconded by Lord Hunt.

The Co-Chairs thanked the Human Trafficking Foundation for their work to support the APPG.
Baroness Young of Hornsey’s Private Members Bill

Baroness Young provided an overview of her Private Members Bill, the Modern Slavery (Transparency in Supply Chains) Bill, the second reading of which took place on Friday 8th July. She explained that Maggie Throup MP has agreed to take the Bill through the Commons.

Roundtable
Transparency in supply chains following the Modern Slavery Act: Where are we now and what more needs to be done?

Present: See table attached

Welcome from the Chair

Fiona Mactaggart welcomed all in attendance to the meeting.

Private Members Bill: Modern Slavery (Transparency in Supply Chains) Bill

Baroness Young spoke about the key aims of her Private Members Bill which had its second reading on Friday 8th July:

- Extend the transparency in supply chains provisions of the Modern Slavery Act to cover public bodies, requiring them to produce a statement of the steps they have taken to tackle slavery in their supply chains
- Require public authorities to undertake due diligence in their procurement process, requiring them to exclude companies which have not fulfilled their TISC requirements
- Require the Secretary of State to produce a list of companies and organisations required to produce a TISC statement

She explained that although the government opposed these proposals the Bill will progress to Committee.

Fiona Mactaggart explained that Maggie Throup MP has agreed to take the Bill through the Commons. She also stated that this Bill provides a good opportunity to explore how the TISC provisions of the Modern Slavery Act can work better. She said that this must be seen as a process and that companies must be encouraged when they show a willingness to examine their supply chains and take steps to eradicate exploitation.

Baroness Butler-Sloss expressed her support for the Bill and agreed that it is important to support companies and provide constructive advice to those which identify exploitation in their supply chains.

Professor Gary Craig stated that he believes the current TISC provisions of the Modern Slavery Act to be deficient. He questioned whether Baroness Young’s proposal regarding procurement processes was a means of extending the reach of TISC below the £36 million threshold. He supported the creation of a list of companies required to produce a TISC statement and said there must be a means
of collating and comparing statements. He also expressed concern that some companies have offered to write TISC statements on behalf of others in order to give them a ‘clean bill of health’.

**Baroness Young** explained that it was not her intention to capture small companies. She said that the list of companies must be free, accessible and organised by sector.

**Peter Andrews** (British Retail Consortium) welcomes Baroness Young’s Bill and calls for businesses to help hold government to account. He said that there is scope for the £36 million threshold to change.

**Phil Bloomer** (Business and Human Rights Resource Centre) said that Baroness Young’s Bill has the potential to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act. He questioned the effectiveness of peer pressure and stressed the need to drive the race to the top. There is an opportunity in provisions regarding transparency and due diligence to drive good behaviour rather than mere compliance. It is important to realise that this is a journey for many companies. The experience in California demonstrates that where companies can demonstrate due diligence it can help them in legal proceedings.

**Francis West** (Unicef) suggested that statements be required to follow the headings in the Home Office guidance.

**Klara Skrivankova** (Anti-Slavery International) expressed her support for Baroness Young’s Bill. She stressed the importance of examining the statements which have already been made, some of which don’t meet the minimum requirements. Some statements have suspiciously similar wording, leading to concerns that someone is providing a service to write statements. She expressed concern that companies which are household names will receive considerable attention whilst others, such as commodity traders, will not. She said it is important to send the message that this is not about catching out companies, rather companies should be encouraged to work with experts to remove the problem.

**Cindy Berman** (Ethical Trading Initiative) also expressed support for the Bill. She stated that it is important to recognise the complexity of supply chains. The key message is how serious are companies taking this issue in terms of embedding it in their policies and action taken throughout the entirety of the supply chain. She said that a list of companies required to produce statements is the minimum expected of government.

**Benet Northcote** (John Lewis Partnership) said that a list of companies is crucial to ensuring accountability. He said it is important not to be distracted by a complicated process of reporting and ignore what is being reported. He encouraged NGOs to hold companies to account and said that a repository for statements is necessary.

**Giles Bolton** (Tesco) said that he liked Baroness Young’s Bill. However, he warned against trying to get businesses to run before they can walk. Although he welcomes the idea of a repository, he said it was important that it not rank companies. He suggested it would be beneficial if the repository allowed individuals to filter statements and compare companies according to sector. He also asked for support from NGOs when they admit to finding slavery, which in turn will help to make the conversation as a whole more honest and open.
Lord Purvis highlighted the availability of funding from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and suggested that the APPG might use such funds to explore what is being done in Commonwealth countries to fight trafficking.

Baroness Young explained that Commonwealth heads of government will be meeting in London next year and suggested that trafficking should be on the agenda for those meetings.

Central Repository for TISC Statements

Fiona Mactaggart welcomed the comments from NGOs regarding supporting businesses taking this issue seriously. She asked who might be well placed to operate the central repository, and suggest the CBI or the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

Camilla Monkton (Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner) said that the Commissioner was not resistant to the idea, but that it would require further funding.

Gary Craig stated that the need for the repository to be neutral rules out the Home Office and the CBI (which is seen to favour ‘big business’). He suggested that an advisory panel be established, representing various interests, to oversee and monitor statements.

Fiona Mactaggart stressed the importance of the registry being free and the need to avoid people or companies profiting from asking companies to pay to register their statements.

Cindy Berman said that the registry must be open, accessible, transparent and robust, making it easy for the public to access and compare statements.

David Ould (Goodweave UK) stated the importance of the repository being simple.

Peter Andrews (British Retail Consortium) stated that it must be mandatory for companies to register their statements.

Phil Bloomer supported the suggestion that it be mandatory and that it be possible to search the registry by sector in order to facilitate comparisons.

Benet Northcote said that he had no problem paying a registration fee in order to cover the cost of the repository.

Ainhoa Barrenechea (FLEX) said there is an inherent problem with charging registration fees – those who are willing to pay will be those who are doing well. The registry will therefore be incomplete.

Gary Craig stated that academics might have a role to play in making the data meaningful and useable.

Fiona Mactaggart proposed that the co-chairs of the APPG write to the Home Office Modern Slavery Unit and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, encouraging them to convene a meeting with those organisations also already involved in creating a repository in order to discuss the possibility of creating a single central website. This will be circulated round attendees.

Meeting ends – 7pm