



**Message from Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director at the occasion of the launch of the AU.COMMIT Campaign to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2009-2012**

**AU Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Tuesday June 16, 2009**

Human trafficking is a crime that shames us all. We have a shared responsibility to fight this modern form of slavery.

I therefore commend the African Union for launching its AU.COMMIT Campaign to Combat Trafficking. It builds on the Ouagadougou Plan of Action, and will help to strengthen implementation of the UN Protocol to Protect, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

Such a campaign is badly needed. The Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, issued earlier this year by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), shows that many African countries lack the laws needed to fight this crime. Furthermore, the criminal justice response has been weak – almost no convictions. And there is a lack of data about trafficking trends.

The evidence that is available tells a woeful tale of how many regions of Africa are highly vulnerable to trafficking. Shockingly, in West and Central Africa, most of the perpetrators are women. Across the continent, many of the victims are children. A grievous tragedy is the fate of children in conflict – boys who learn to shoot before they can read, girls who are violated before they reach womanhood.

AU.COMMIT can play an important role in strengthening the 3 “P” agenda: to prevent trafficking; to protect the victims; and to prosecute the perpetrators.

UNODC is your partner: as guardian of the world’s anti-human trafficking instrument, innovator of the Global Initiative to fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT), and provider of technical assistance.

Together we can rid the world of a scourge that has no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.