

United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking of Persons

“Creating Pathways for Education for Victims/Survivors of Trafficking in Persons”
High Level Meeting on Trafficking in Persons at the United Nations

**Remarks by Ali Boak, Director, Global Center on Human
Trafficking at Montclair State University**

November 22, 2021

Thank you, Ms. Schantz. Good morning ladies and gentleman. My name is Ali Boak and I am the Director of the Global Center on Human Trafficking. Thank you to all of my colleagues for your insight and experience, and thank you to the organizers for the opportunity to be part of this important discussion on education and access to education for survivors.

The Global Center on Human Trafficking is a multi-disciplinary, university-based center at Montclair State University, located in Montclair, NJ in the United States. Located less than 33 kilometers from New York City, MSU is a diverse public university with over 20,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Our class of 2025 has students from 32 states and 11 countries.

I was asked to share a little bit about what the GCHT does and how our work is multi-disciplinary.

What do we do? Our mission is to develop novel and innovative solutions to the complex problems of human trafficking.

This is our mission because the way the world has been addressing human trafficking for the past 21 years, since the passage of the Palermo Protocol, frankly is not working. There are too many victims of human trafficking, too many traffickers, and not nearly enough support and justice for survivors.

Our goal is to transform the way the world is responding to the crime of human trafficking.

We have prioritized 6 areas for action:

1. Survivor Support and Empowerment
2. Education, Outreach and Training
3. Collaboration and Sharing
4. Research and Program Evaluation
5. Policy, Advocacy and Regulation
6. Survivor Services

How will we do this? A 3-Pronged Strategy

Prong 1: Mobilizing multi-disciplinary, multi-sector work at MSU, locally, nationally, and internationally.

Our Center is based on the idea that complex problems are best solved when a group leverages diverse perspectives and expands the possible solutions through input from multiple fields. Our center brings together distinguished faculty and staff across a wide range of disciplines and fields such as justice studies, music, visual arts, public health, entrepreneurship

and innovation, child advocacy, business, communications, pre-law, technology, and the list goes on.

A key objective of the GCHT is to be a convener locally, nationally, and globally to bring diverse groups together to participate in reimagining the response to human trafficking together with survivors and innovators.

Although we focus on 6 priority areas, our work does not occur in silos because of the multi-disciplinary structure of the Center.

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Prong 2: Developing model survivor-led policy, programs, research and advocacy.

We are dedicated to promoting survivor led policy, programs, research, and advocacy at the GCHT to effectively respond to the crime of human trafficking. **The field must move to engage and support survivors as leaders and partners.** We must challenge ourselves to move even further than a victim-centered approach and we must learn from, listen to, and build our responses based on the lived experience of survivors of all forms of human trafficking.

With our partners at Karana Rising, The Global Center on Human Trafficking is creating the Global Survivor Collaborative to elevate and support the leadership role of survivors in developing policy, programs, research, and advocacy agendas.

Prong 3: Fostering and supporting innovators to develop novel approaches and solutions

To realize our vision of all individuals living free from human trafficking, we must revolutionize how the crime is currently addressed. At the GCHT this means supporting innovators from across many sectors to shed new light and perspectives on the crime. In Spring of 2021, we launched our social entrepreneurship program with teams of students from across many disciplines competing to develop innovative ideas for improving how a local service partner can better reach at-risk and trafficked youth.

Institutions of higher education can and should play an important role in ending human trafficking. I was asked to share some insights and recommendations in this regard.

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1. Research: A global research agenda should be developed that is driven by survivors and engages survivors in all aspects of the research. Further, qualitative and quantitative studies by and of survivors is necessary at the macro- and micro-level understanding of the phenomenon. We need to reduce our reliance on small, unrepresentative samples and end the practice of developing interventions based on extrapolations from small convenience samples. Research must be increased in areas of the world with the highest prevalence of human trafficking. International research collaborations must be funded and supported. The only way to truly increase our knowledge is to support and engage survivors as researchers, interviewers, data collectors, and data analysts.
2. Developing a coordinated campus response to human trafficking. College campuses are home to many vulnerable populations including young people away from home for the first time; first generation students; international students; students with intellectual and/or physical disabilities; LGBTQ students; students studying abroad; visiting faculty and staff; undocumented migrants; victims of abuse and/or domestic violence; among others. Colleges are uniquely positioned to prevent human trafficking on their campus through education and awareness. They must also be prepared if a trafficking situation is identified. A university must have in place protocols and procedures on how to respond in a trauma informed, survivor led way.
3. Offering pathways to future independence and fulfillment:
 - Develop scholarship programs for survivors that provide for housing, tuition, food, and a support program for staying in college.

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- Offer mentorship programs for survivors interested in going to college.
 - Offer alternatives to 4-year degree programs.
 - Offer free guidance to survivors on the application process, financial aid, choosing a school, writing an essay, etc.
 - Host workshops, activities, and other events for survivors on college campuses
4. Prepare future generations of professionals that are knowledgeable about human trafficking.
- Incorporate learning about human trafficking into degree programs especially public health, law, education, nursing, medical, criminal justice, social work, child advocacy and many others.

Respectfully,

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