



United against Trafficking of Human Beings and Labour exploitation in Europe

1st European S. Marta Group Conference, 8/9 February 2022

On 8/9 February 2022, the international "Santa Marta Group" will hold its first European conference. The theme of the conference will be "Eradication of Modern Slavery – How can we succeed? Human Trafficking and Labour exploitation in Europe" and will be jointly organised by the Santa Marta Group and the Migration Commission of the German Bishops' Conference. The Santa Marta Group is an alliance of high-ranking church representatives and law enforcement officials from over 30 countries as well as other governmental and non-governmental organisations. It first met in 2014 at the invitation of Pope Francis, who has made the fight against slavery a priority of his pontificate. The aim of the group, in which the German Bishops' Conference also participates, is to develop joint and effective strategies against human trafficking and exploitation.

The conference focuses on Europe. It brings together partners from across the continent to discuss concrete action steps to prevent and combat human trafficking and to recommend them to church actors and civil society organisations as well as to the decision makers. Already in December 2020, the Santa Marta Group and the German Bishops' Conference held a preparatory expert seminar on the topics of victim protection, labour exploitation and supply chains, finance and law enforcement.

Media colleagues are cordially invited to two press briefings and the opening morning of the conference. Currently planned are:

Tuesday, 8 February 2022

9.00 a.m (all times are CET):

Press briefing at the start of the conference with Cardinal Vincent Nichols (Archbishop of Westminster, President of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and President of the Santa Marta Group), Archbishop Dr Stefan Heße (Archbishop of Hamburg and Chairman of the Migration Commission of the German Bishops' Conference) and the Apostolic Administrator Auxiliary Bishop Rolf Steinhäuser (Archdiocese of Cologne)

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10.00 a.m. – 13.30 a.m. Opportunity to attend the opening sessions of the conference:

- Opening: Archbishop Dr Stefan Heße (Hamburg), Apostolic Administrator Auxiliary Bishop Rolf Steinhäuser (Cologne), Mayor Henriette Reker (Cologne)
- Session 1: Where do we want to go? Kevin Hyland (OBE), special adviser Santa Marta Group and member of GRETA, Ireland
- Session 2: How has Covid-19 changed the landscape? – Transnational organized crime in times of the pandemic, Dr. Judith Vorrath – German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Germany
- Session 3: Challenges of the Work against Trafficking for Labour Exploitation: Activities of the EU against Trafficking for Labour Exploitation (Diane Schmitt, EU Antitrafficking Coordinator, EU); Procurer and Employer – Role and responsibility of state authorities (Elisabeth Moiron-Braud, Mission interministérielle pour la protection des femmes contre les violences et la lutte contre la traite des êtres humains (MIPROF), France, tbc); Procurer and Employer – Role and responsibility of the Church (Sr. Alessandra Smerilli, Secretary ad. int. – Dicastery IHD, Vatican); Challenges for law enforcement agencies (Catherine De Bolle, Europol president, France, tbc)

Wednesday, 9 February 2022

5.15 p.m.

Press briefing at the end of the consultations with Cardinal Vincent Nichols (Westminster), Archbishop Dr Stefan Heße (Hamburg), Auxiliary Bishop Ansgar Puff (Cologne) and another participant

Setting / Background:

On the occasion of Anti-Trafficking Day 2021, Pope Francis emphasised that "an economy without trafficking in human beings is a courageous economy" that "needs the courage to combine legitimate profit with the promotion of employment and decent working conditions". In the current global Corona crisis, exploitation in many sectors of the labour market has also become more visible in Europe. At the same time, more people are becoming victims of human trafficking and exploitation out of necessity, because, as Pope Francis states, "in the crisis, human trafficking is rampant". The consequences of the crisis and the impact on the situation of victims of human trafficking are therefore also important topics of the conference.

Originally, the conference was supposed to take place in the Cathedral City at the invitation of the Archdiocese of Cologne. However, due to the pandemic, it has to take place as a video conference.

Notes:

The current programme of the event can be downloaded here www.dbk.de.

Media representatives are requested to register by sending an informal email to pressestelle@dbk.de. They will receive an email with the login details (link) shortly before the event. The conference languages - also in the press talks - are German and English. Simultaneous translation will be provided.

The German Bishops' Conference is an association of the Roman-Catholic bishops of all dioceses in Germany. It currently has 69 members (as per: January 2022) from the 27 German dioceses. The German Bishops' Conference was established to promote joint pastoral tasks, to advise one another, to coordinate the Church's work, to jointly adopt decisions and to maintain contact with other Bishops' Conferences. The highest body of the German Bishops' Conference is the Plenary Assembly of all bishops, at which the bishops regularly meet in spring and autumn for several days.