

**DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN SULLIVAN  
OPENING STATEMENT BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS  
COMMITTEE, ON THE 2017 TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT  
JULY 13, 2017**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Senator Cardin, Members of the Committee. I am honored to appear before you again today to discuss the *2017 Trafficking in Persons Report*, released by the State Department last month. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The State Department is grateful for the Committee's leadership and input on this issue, and on human rights and democracy more broadly. Individual liberty and the freedoms of religion, speech, press, assembly, and the right to petition the government are at the core of who we are as Americans. Secretary Tillerson and I share a personal commitment in this regard, and we are proud of the significant efforts across the Department of State to protect and promote individual freedom.

Through hearings like this one, and strong legislation, you have been consistent and tireless in fighting the insidious crime of human trafficking. I look forward to our continued collaboration on this and our broader efforts to defend the world's most vulnerable.

I would particularly like to thank Ambassador-at-Large Susan Coppedge, who leads the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, also known as the TIP Office. Susan and her team have done a remarkable job – not only in producing this detailed report, but through efforts to encourage foreign officials, NGO leaders, and others around the world to join us in this fight.

At the public rollout of the Report in June, Secretary Tillerson read a sobering line from the preamble of the *Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000*: “As the 21<sup>st</sup> century begins, the degrading institution of slavery continues throughout the world.” Seventeen years later, there are still more than an estimated 20 million victims of human trafficking. But the Secretary encouraged us to join in a shared hope: “that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the last century of human trafficking...”

The *Trafficking in Persons Report* is an instrument that will help that hope become a reality. It is not only a symbol of U.S. global leadership on combating human trafficking, but a diagnostic tool to assess government efforts across the 3Ps: **prosecuting** traffickers, **protecting** and empowering victims, and **preventing** future trafficking crimes.

Since the enactment of the TVPA in 2000 and the TIP Report's first publication in 2001, the Report has prompted foreign governments to enact comprehensive legislation, prosecute human traffickers, establish national action plans, implement anti-trafficking policies and programs that protect victims, and conduct prevention campaigns.

The focus of this year's Report is on governments' responsibilities to criminalize human trafficking in all its forms, and to prosecute offenders. It also emphasizes the responsibility of governments to enforce anti-trafficking laws, to prevent the use of child soldiers, and to prosecute corrupt public officials who choose to turn a blind eye. To combat human trafficking effectively, governments must also root out complicity and corruption by law enforcement and public officials.

The Report makes clear that many countries are taking this issue seriously. I would like to emphasize some of the positive efforts countries have made in the past year, as discussed in the Report.

As Secretary Tillerson noted:

- Afghanistan serves as an example of progress. Last Summer, President Ghani ordered an investigation into institutionalized sexual abuse of children by security forces,

and promised punishment for perpetrators. In January, the government enacted a new law to criminalize bacha baazi [*BAH-chah BAH-zee*], a practice that exploits boys for social and sexual entertainment. We will continue to work with the Afghan government toward even greater progress this year, as they build on these efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers – including complicit government officials.

- Ukraine serves as another example. The country has been on the Watch list for four years, but was upgraded to Tier 2 status because of its efforts to improve investigations of trafficking. This has led to the arrest and conviction of police officers, public officials, and others found to be complicit or willfully negligent in the trafficking of girls and boys under their care. Today, officials are on notice that complicity in trafficking leads to strict punishment.

But unfortunately, some countries have back-pedaled.

- As Secretary Tillerson mentioned, this year's Report reveals that China has not taken serious steps to end its own complicity in trafficking. Tens of thousands of North Korean citizens are working overseas as forced laborers, primarily in

China and Russia. The North Korean regime profits financially – making hundreds of millions of dollars per year on the backs of their exploited citizens working abroad. Responsible nations simply cannot allow this. Because of the Chinese government’s lack of significant efforts to address and eliminate trafficking, China was downgraded to Tier Three.

The Report is one component of the State Department’s year-round efforts to combat human trafficking around the world. It informs our foreign assistance programming to develop anti-trafficking strategies for each region, and to prioritize countries according to their need for assistance and their political will to make improvements. We also use the analysis and recommendations as a roadmap to guide U.S. diplomacy on human trafficking, so our Ambassadors and officials at every level can engage with foreign counterparts to encourage renewed efforts in this fight. I commit to you today that as I engage with foreign government officials, I will, like many of you, raise anti-trafficking concerns, as well as broader human rights issues. All countries – including the United States – have more they can do to fight modern slavery.

I am proud of the progress reflected in the 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report, but there is much more work to do to make the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the last for human trafficking. We are eager to work with Congress to that end, and I look forward to your questions.