



## Modern Slavery and Climate Change: The Commitment of the Cities



Today we are facing two tragic emergencies that are related in different ways: the climate change crisis and the new forms of slavery. We are looking forward to Pope Francis' new encyclical on the environment and human ecology, which will refer to the fact that the consequences of climate change affect the most vulnerable people, those who do not even get to enjoy the advantages of the use of fossil fuels. The religious leaders, called to condemn the new forms of slavery, have highlighted the connection between natural and human environment. As a matter of fact, global warming is one of the causes of poverty and forced migration, which are breeding grounds for human trafficking, forced labour, prostitution and organ trafficking.

More than 30 million of people are currently victims of modern day slavery, trafficked in a hideous market with estimated illegal profits of \$US150 billion a year. From the very beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has taken a firm stand against modern slavery, calling all communities to reject entirely and without exception all systematic deprivation of individual freedom for the purpose of personal and commercial exploitation. One of his initiatives, the Santa Marta Group, which he founded with Cardinal Vincent Nichols, brings together bishops and law enforcement agencies all over the world. It was this Group that highlighted the need for the local authorities to provide their support to their police chiefs in the fight against modern slavery.

On 2 December 2014 Pope Francis and other Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jewish leaders signed the [Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders Against Modern Slavery](#) as a public statement of their commitment to work together in spiritual and practical action to eradicate this

crime against humanity and restore dignity and freedom to its victims.

On April 28th, 2015, [during another meeting](#) at the Casina Pio IV, the Pontifical Academies, together with the UN and the religious leaders, reiterated their commitment to tackle these two global emergencies.

The active contribution of local governments is crucial in the fight against these two emergencies: Mayors and local authorities are called to play their role in ending this crime against humanity and take measures against environmental damage. The Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences are organising a 1-day workshop that will take place on 21 July 2015, during which 50 Mayors of the most important cities of the world will have the possibility of sharing this commitment in the presence of Pope Francis, whose attendance has been confirmed. The main objective of the Workshop is for Mayors and local administrators to join the religious leaders and the law enforcement authorities in their request to the UN to consider modern slavery and human trafficking as a crime against humanity, and to put moral pressure on the UN to make sure that the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be approved by the UN in September 2015 and in the Paris December COP-21 Summit give enough weight to these two tragic emergencies.