



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Zonta International commemorates World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on July 30

**[OAK BROOK, ILLINOIS, 30 July 2020]**— On July 30, Zonta International encourages its members throughout the world to promote activities to recognize the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, which was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in a resolution adopted in 2013. The day was established to raise awareness of the plight of human trafficking victims, and to promote and protect their rights.

The 2020 theme for the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons will focus on the first responders to human trafficking. These are the people who work in different sectors—identifying, supporting, counseling and seeking justice for victims of trafficking, and challenging the impunity of the traffickers.

Zonta members are being encouraged to highlight the work of first responders in their countries, community or organization; generate, share, like and comment on messages on social media for the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons; to actively campaign to raise awareness about climate change; and to partner with organizations in their locales that fight human trafficking to raise awareness and affect change.

“Zonta International has long worked to achieve gender equality. For this to happen, human trafficking must be eliminated,” said Zonta International President Sharon Langenbeck. “With climate change increasing the risks of this human rights issue, we must bring awareness to both. If we work together, I am confident we can make an impact on both the climate and human trafficking.”

According to the United Nations Trafficking in Person’s Protocol, “Trafficking in Persons is defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”

Although women, men and children are victims of trafficking, the primary victims worldwide are women and girls, the majority of whom are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. A 2019 report from the International Labour Organization estimated 3.8 million adults and 1 million children were victims of forced sexual exploitation in 2016 around the world, 99% of which were women and girls. Traffickers primarily target women because they are disproportionately affected by poverty and discrimination, factors that impede their access to employment, educational opportunities and other resources.

There are fears that COVID-19 is making the task of identifying victims of human trafficking even more difficult. Human trafficking victims are more at risk of contracting the virus, less equipped to prevent it and have less access to healthcare to ensure their recovery. Essential and practical operations to support them have become a challenge, due to countries adjusting their priorities during the pandemic.

*Zonta International ([www.zonta.org](http://www.zonta.org)) is a leading global organization of professionals empowering women worldwide through service and advocacy. In 1919, a small group of founders in Buffalo, New York, had a vision to help all women realize greater equality. Today, more than 28,000 members in 61 countries work together to make gender equality a worldwide reality for women and girls. Since 1923, Zonta International has provided more than US\$41.2 million to empower women and girls and expand their access to education, health care, economic opportunities and safe living conditions.*

**Contact:**

Megan Radavich  
Assistant Executive Director, Programs & Advocacy  
Zonta International  
Phone: +1.630.928.1400  
Email: [pr@zonta.org](mailto:pr@zonta.org)  
[www.zonta.org](http://www.zonta.org)

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