



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS

I would like to send my best wishes to all those taking part in the event to mark the EU Anti-Human Trafficking Day in Cork and to commemorate the time that the abolitionist Frederick Douglass spent there while delivering lectures throughout Ireland.

The trade of human beings for the purposes of forced labour, exploitation or slavery is a most grave exploitation of a person's right to freedom, dignity and security. Today more than twenty million people across the world have been recruited, coerced or transported into situations of exploitation or slavery, and the hidden crime of human trafficking continues to increase. Every year many hundreds of thousands of our fellow global citizens are trafficked and used for modern day slavery, sexual exploitation, forced marriage and organ trade. Here in Ireland statistics indicate that incidents of trafficking of humans into our country have risen at an alarming rate in recent years. The figures therefore are greatly worrying and speak of a grave perversion of the sense of common humanity that must lie at the heart of any civilised society. They also speak of myriad individual and tragic stories of victimisation, deception, cruelty, fear, abuse and deprivation of liberty.

If we wish to truly strive to create a just, equal and ethical world, the combatting of human trafficking must be acknowledged as a responsibility that we all share. We must, like Frederick Douglas, speak out against, and fulfil our civic duty in denouncing this modern-day slavery. Human trafficking should be the concern of every citizen, in every community, in every nation across the globe.

Today's event is therefore greatly important. May I thank everyone involved and wish every success as you continue with your imperative work.

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland

9th of July, 2019