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COATnet

A world free from human trafficking

PRESS RELEASE

COATnet Celebrates 25 Years of Action Against Human Trafficking

Toward a World Free from Human Trafficking

Rome and Vatican City | 17–19 November 2026



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The **United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC)** and its related protocols, **adopted by the UN General Assembly on 15 November 2000**, remain the cornerstone of international efforts against human trafficking and other forms of transnational organised crime. In this context, from **17 to 19 November 2026, COATnet, the Christian Organisations Against Trafficking Network** (https://coatnet.global/), will celebrate its **25th anniversary** in Rome and Vatican City under the theme **"Toward a World Free from Human Trafficking."** The three-day gathering will bring together approximately 40 representatives of faith-based and civil society organisations, international institutions, and anti-trafficking experts committed to promoting integral human development.

The anniversary marks 25 years of cooperation, advocacy and joint actions by organisations working together to prevent human trafficking, protect people affected by exploitation, strengthen responses to this persistent global challenge, and promote survivor leadership. Organised around the themes of cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and renewed commitment, the event will offer an opportunity to reflect on COATnet's achievements, examine emerging global challenges, and set priorities for future action.

Addressing human trafficking: Global challenges and shared responsibility

The opening session on 17 November will bring together representatives of the Holy See, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and Caritas Internationalis, and distinguished international experts and faith-based organisations committed to combating human trafficking. Among the contributors are Dr Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, Former UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2014–2020), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Secours Catholique-Caritas France, Caritas Italiana, the Santa Marta Group, the Sovereign Order of Malta, the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), Talitha Kum International and the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations.

COATnet members and partners will examine global trends in human trafficking, regional policy developments, protection gaps and emerging risks, alongside practical experiences in addressing trafficking at the national, regional and global level. The anniversary programme will also look back at the origins and development of COATnet, highlighting the importance of international networking and cooperation among faith-based organisations working to prevent trafficking and support survivors. The network

will also introduce its new visual identity, logo and website (https://coatnet.global/) as part of its ongoing development.

On 18 November, participants will take part in Migrantour, an intercultural guided walk through Rome's Esquilino district. The activity will explore migration, diversity and social inclusion through the experiences and histories of migrant communities, encouraging reflection on the connections between vulnerability, exploitation and human trafficking. The day will continue with a participatory workshop dedicated to the future of COATnet's action research, bringing members together to exchange perspectives and contribute to a shared research framework. The discussions will support the network's efforts to strengthen collaboration, generate knowledge and develop more effective responses to international advocacy efforts.

On 19 November, representatives of COATnet member organisations will participate in a private audience with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican. This moment will offer an opportunity to acknowledge 25 years of COATnet efforts to promote integral human development.

Looking towards the future

COATnet is a network of 30 Christian organisations committed to eradicating human trafficking and other forms of exploitation through international cooperation, networking, and advocacy, with a strong focus on survivor leadership.

As COATnet marks 25 years of work, the anniversary is both a moment of recognition and an opportunity to look ahead. Through stronger partnerships, shared learning, research and advocacy, the network aims to continue supporting coordinated efforts to prevent human trafficking, protect people at risk and promote the dignity and rights of every human being. Human trafficking cannot be addressed by any organisation acting alone. Cooperation among faith-based organisations, public institutions, international bodies, and local communities remains essential to building a world where every person is free from exploitation. As stated by Pope Francis in Fratelli Tutti, paragraph 24: «Trafficking in persons and other contemporary forms of enslavement are a worldwide problem that needs to be taken seriously by humanity as a whole: "since criminal organizations employ global networks to achieve their goals, efforts to eliminate this phenomenon also demand a common and, indeed, a global effort on the part of various sectors of society"».

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