

By Gabriella Bottani, SMC
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Mr. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Ambassador Richmond, distinguished guests:

On behalf of the 2019 TIP heroes and those we represent, the recognition we receive today honours us and the many people, often unknown, committed to counteracting human trafficking around the world. The annual nomination by the TIP Office has become a powerful symbol of the commitment to combat human trafficking at an international level. Ambassador Richmond, thank you for this significant contribution, and our inclusion in the global network of freedom keepers. This is a great responsibility for all of us who are being recognized today!

I am here because of the 10 anniversary of Talitha Kum, a global network of women of faith, challenged by the violence and the serious violation of human rights caused by human trafficking and any other kind of exploitation around the world. I would like to thank Ambassador Callista Gingrich and the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See for the nomination.

With 50 national and regional networks led by sisters, Talitha Kum is active on every continent and in 77 countries. The organization is an on-the ground network whose members are involved in raising awareness, preventing human trafficking, and protecting survivors. This includes the management of shelters and the provision of support for their socio-economic rehabilitation and reintegration. It is an initiative that mirrors the great work done by my fellow Trafficking Report Heroes. Talitha Kum also promotes an annual World Day of

Prayer and Awareness against Trafficking in Persons, which takes place on the eighth of February, and which is supported by Pope Francis.

Like the individuals and organizations represented here this morning, we work in dialogue and in collaboration with people of different faith traditions and with people of good will. We seek to overcome any kind of ideological, religious and political manipulation of anti-human trafficking measures and activities, promoting instead a holistic person/survivor centred approach, respecting the inherent dignity of each person.

All of us being honoured today hope that every person and institution, which is committed to combatting trafficking in persons, would address the causes and vulnerabilities that contribute to human trafficking. These include:

- Unequal power structures in our societies, especially regarding women, children, and indigenous people.
- Inadequate migration policies in an increasingly interconnected world.
- And an economic model that exploits human beings and environmental resources for the profit of a few in contrast with the exploitation of the many.

Talita Kum is an Aramaic expression which means "young girl, I say to you, stand up."

This is a call all the heroes make today – to courageously raise the bar, and our dreams, in order to open new pathways toward freedom. This freedom is

possible when it is based on a mutually transformative relationship, at the personal level, between survivors and anti-trafficking activists, and the organizations we represent, but also at the geo-political level, between countries of origin, transit, and destination.

Let us stand up, together!