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coMMISSION LEADERSHIP CALLS NEW Trafficking Report a Vital Tool of Diplomacy
Cardin, Smith join Secretary Clinton at Report's Release

WASHINGTON—**U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)**, Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission) and **Co-Chairman Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL)** hailed the State Department's release today of the **2009 Trafficking in Persons Report** as a critical tool in monitoring and raising awareness about modern-day slavery.

The 2009 report -- the 7th annual survey of its kind -- is expanded to include 175 countries this year, 26 of which have enacted new anti-trafficking laws.

Speaking at the State Department alongside Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton for the report's public release, Chairman Cardin spoke about the need for international cooperation to hold traffickers accountable for their actions. He has made anti-trafficking a key priority of the Commission's work.

“Our goal is simple: We want to end the trafficking that unfortunately has taken root in every part of the world. We know that trafficking is connected to organized crime and part of a systemic international problem. We know those who are trafficked are victims and need to be treated with respect as victims. This report provides an objective yardstick that we will use when we meet with leaders from other countries to engage them in this fight,” **said Chairman Cardin**. “I am proud of the leadership the United States has taken in combating this problem, but we know that we can do better. Now it's time for us to follow through and work with all countries to expand counter-trafficking laws, increase prosecutions, and, in fact, end this modern-day slavery.”

Co-Chairman Hastings was once a migrant agricultural worker in South Florida and has held hearings on combating trafficking.

“Decades ago, I witnessed first-hand the potential for exploitation in such labor conditions. Many agricultural laborers still encounter practices as insidious as I had seen in my youth, which rob them of their basic human rights. Unfortunately, these circumstances thrive throughout the world. We would be at a serious loss in challenging exploitation were it not for the important monitoring efforts of the Trafficking in Persons Report each year,” **Co-Chairman Hastings said**.

“Women and children are the primary victims of sex trafficking and labor trafficking,” said Helsinki Commission **Ranking Member Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ)**, who wrote the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, which mandated the annual report that was released today. “This year’s report highlights how the current world economic situation has led to increased trafficking around the world, including in participating States of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe. When we meet in July as part of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I hope to work with like-minded parliamentarians to once again underscore the importance of enhancing the tools for the prosecution of traffickers and increasing support for those preyed upon by traffickers in these difficult economic times.”

A full transcript from today’s event is available [here](#).

The 2009 *Trafficking in Persons Report* is available [here](#).

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The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, is an independent agency of the Federal Government charged with monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Accords and advancing comprehensive security through promotion of human rights, democracy, and economic, environmental and military cooperation in 56 countries. The Commission consists of nine members from the U.S. Senate, nine from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense, and Commerce.