



## Modern Slavery and Resilience to Climate Change

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*Cumbre #MayorsCare sobre*

*Esclavitud moderna y cambio climático: el compromiso de las ciudades*

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Thank you very much, Program Director.

Let me, in the first instance, thank and acknowledge His Holiness and the leadership of the Church and the Academy for inviting us to participate in this important conversation in relation to human trafficking and, in particular, in relation to modern slavery. And I thought one might want to share some of the experiences of Johannesburg within the context of the nature of the city and the issues and challenges that we deal with and confront on a daily basis.

I just will start by placing Johannesburg in context: it is the largest city in the country, it is the economic heart of the country. In fact, it is the economic heart of the continent. It is home to the largest stock exchange and home to more than 70% of the multilateral companies or multinational companies that are located on the African continent.

Yet it is a city of great inequality, where the poor, in fact, do not have access to some of the most basic services and we still confront problems in relation to food insecurity and other challenges. It is a city that continues to attract more and more people, with the population of Johannesburg increasing by about 37% between the census period 2001 to 2011; an increase of about 10,000 people every month, people that are coming to the city of Johannesburg in search of opportunities. Now, of course, when people come, many of them are poor and increase the level of challenges that we confront with regards to addressing the problems of development and access in our city, and I thought in this regard for the purposes of this presentation, I might want to share an anecdote.

In April this year we had sporadic incidents of violence by locals against migrants, particularly African migrants, in our communities. So I went on a visit to those communities that are affected, together with the delegation of the Church, the South African Council of Churches, the President of the Council of Churches, the General Secretary of the Council of Churches and other church leaders, to go and first-hand experience and engage with the people that would be engaged in these acts of violence. In the first instance, these would be poor people who, in fact, are contesting for resources amongst each other. And the response we received, as we engaged with these communities, when we asked the question, "Why do you do this?", the response we received is that, "Well, in fact, the problem we have is that they take our jobs, they accept jobs that pay less than the minimum wage, they work for more hours than in fact is prescribed by national labour relations legislation and therefore we think that we have become more vulnerable and poor because of the migrants". Not only do they say so, they raised a whole range of other issues, but our practical experience is that in fact this is not just happening in an urban context but actually is worse in rural areas. And it has required of us to do a detailed analysis as to what the causes of migration into Johannesburg are and how we can begin to respond to some of these causes. Now, some of the causes have been raised before, they might be as a result of migration due to war and strife and some of the countries in the Sadak region over mineral and energy resources, in particular those CO<sub>2</sub>-emitting fossil fuels that people are competing about. But it is also as the result of loss of productive capacity, in particular agricultural capacity, as a result of the impact of climate change on the neighbouring countries and cities. And people come into the city and settle along the riverbanks and they settle in slums and are the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change in the urban context, in the context of Johannesburg, as a result of flash floods and other problems such as shack fires and so on.

Our response, having experienced this in the years before, has led us to establish a migrants desk that would address all the issues and challenges that confront migrants in our city, the establishment of a Johannesburg Migration Advisory Council, consisting of both host and migrant communities to deal with the issues ranging from causes, integration and all the issues that impact on migrants, including access to basic services. And I have developed joint programmes and campaigns that include both host and migrant communities to enable social inclusion and facilitate integration.

We are proud as a city to say that, on the basis of the example that we have set as a city, both our provincial government in Gauteng and our national government have, since the acts that happened in April this year,

followed the lead of the city of Johannesburg and established both institutional and committee mechanisms that enable and facilitate social inclusion and social integration. And we believe that it is important in this regard that, in fact, on the basis of bold decision-making and action, the local government was able to set the pace and direction that was followed by both provincial and national government.

We also believe that we have a collective responsibility at an international level, as local government associations, to follow up on the initiatives by His Holiness to place modern slavery firmly on the agenda as part of the outcomes of the Sustainable Development Goals in New York in September this year, and the climate change agreements in Paris in December. Indeed, we believe that we have a responsibility to mainstream this in our own associations and on the basis of the leadership provided here and as host city of the Africities conference at the end of November this year, I will certainly add this as part of the discussions that need to be held in Johannesburg and a particular agreement to be reached by local authorities in Africa about what needs to be done with regards to modern slavery.

As we aim towards agreement on the SDGs in September and the historic COP21, I think it is important, as I conclude, to take heed of the words of the Father of our Nation and the late President Nelson Mandela and I quote, "When people are determined, they can overcome anything and the fundamental concern for others in our individual and community life will go a long way in making the world a better place we so passionately dreamt off". Thank you very much.