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peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being
circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council
resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The mission of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc is to enhance the quality of life for women and their families in the United States and globally through community service, civil, and social action. Much of our work in the United States and countries across the globe embraces health, wellness, gender equality – specifically Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 5. Since 2016, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc has taken a stand against human trafficking in all its forms, and to advance social action, public education, and advocacy to eliminate this scourge on humanity. We call for a broad-based partnership to end the criminal exploitation of women, men, and children worldwide.

Background

Human trafficking, also known as “trafficking in persons” or “modern slavery”, takes many forms. Forced labor, commercial sexual exploitation, and child sexual victimization are among the most recognized, however, involuntary marriage, illegal adoption, child soldiers, and organ harvesting are other modes of exploitation. Human trafficking is a prolific multibillion dollar industry that affects perhaps hundreds of millions directly and indirectly. Estimates range as high as 40.3 million persons are trafficked in more than 130 countries globally. In 2017, Human Rights First projected that 71 per cent of known human traffic victims were women and that children under the age of 18 make up 25 per cent of the trafficked population. Every day, victims are lured, forced, defrauded, or coerced into one or more forms of human trafficking exploitation. They exist among us, often in plain sight, and yet their suffering often goes unchecked due to a lack of awareness or a mandate for effective intervention and consequences.

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. believes that outreach and public education is critical to increasing awareness, promoting civic agency, and generating urgency for strong intervention and effective action. Likewise, we believe that cross-disciplinary advocacy is needed to address the underlying issues that allow human trafficking to thrive. We call for multilateral public policy discussion to develop recommendations and cooperative agreements that result in greater enforcement and penalties for the proponents of human trafficking crimes. We believe that such a campaign and advocacy should generate at least as much fervor as efforts to combat drug trafficking and other multinational criminal activity.

Social action

In 2017, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc initiated a toolkit through our social action committee to promote public education on human trafficking among our members and communities. Our more than 500 chapters throughout the United States, as well as in Bermuda, South Korea, Germany, Canada, the Caribbean, the United States Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, and Dubai chapters are encouraged to host “Golden Alert” public education forums, using local resources and information. In addition, sessions were held, with parental permission, for young people attending our annual youth symposium programs, aimed at vulnerable pre-teens and teens. The toolkit encourages chapters to identify expert community members to increase public awareness:

1. What is human trafficking?
2. Facts and figures on local and global impacts.
3. Warning signs to identify possible victims.
4. Reporting suspected exploitation.

5. Resources, tools ,and referral opportunities.
6. Partnering with local experts, law enforcement, and elected and appointed officials.
7. Local laws, policy and legislation, and how to influence them.

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc has mobilized its more than 100,00 global members to address social inequities. Our leadership meets at least annually with members of the United States Congress Black Congressional Caucus, as well as with various state legislators to discuss public policy and legislative issues around signature programs that embrace Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 5. Additionally, the sorority has joined forces with several civil rights and social justice organizations to tackle issues of equity and equality facing our nation.

We can and must do more. In 2020 and beyond, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc will expand and strengthen our impact by partnering with a number of venerable organizations and non-governmental organizations with demonstrated capacity, expertise, and resources to address the multitude of issues at hand. By combining our resources and partnering with these organizations, we expect to significantly influence public education and advocacy around the topic. Ultimately, we anticipate defeating the mechanisms that allow human trafficking to exist in a civil society. We are in talks with other expert partners and our current collaborative partnerships, including:

- The New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking’s mission is to unite New Jersey Communities to abolish human trafficking. Formed in 2011, the coalition is made up of more than 180 diverse groups in the state, which include nonprofits, faith-based organizations, government agencies, academics, law enforcement, and direct service providers. The New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking works to serve as the hub of community efforts statewide to increase coordination and visibility of New Jersey’s commitment to end human trafficking.
- The Cleveland Rape Crisis Center is the largest independent rape crisis center in the nation. The Cleveland Rape Crisis Center is a non-profit organization that leverages more than 80 employees and 100 volunteers to reach more than 60,000 people annually. Its mission is to support survivors of rape and sexual abuse, promote healing and prevention, and advocate for social change in our community.
- The Cleveland Rape Crisis Center provides human trafficking services across Northeast Ohio and features a Trafficking Victim Assistance Program, providing services to foreign-born undocumented trafficked individuals. The Cleveland Rape Crisis Center served 32 per cent more survivors of human trafficking in 2018 than in 2015. This trend has been steady over the last three years. The organization anticipates serving more survivors in the next few years as recent, highly public, sex trafficking instances start to impact public awareness and encourage victims to seek intervention and advocacy.
- The Anambra State Association of New Jersey is a social organization that aims to build community by providing a forum for sharing information, connecting neighbors, promoting activities, and fostering civic involvement in our diverse community. The organization has outreach projects that impact families in the United States and Anambra State of Nigeria.