

Statement on a Meeting of the Interagency Task Force To Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

March 15, 2012

Nearly 150 years ago, in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to the enduring cause of freedom. Then as now, we remain steadfast in our resolve to see that all men, women, and children have the opportunity to realize this greatest of gifts. Yet millions around the world, including here in the United States, toil under the boot of modern slavery. Mothers and fathers are forced to work in fields and factories against their will or in service to debts that can never be repaid. Sons and daughters are sold for sex, abducted as child soldiers, or coerced into involuntary labor. In dark corners of our world and hidden in plain sight in our own communities, human beings are exploited for financial gain and subjected to unspeakable cruelty.

Slavery remains the affront to human dignity and stain on our collective conscience that it has always been. That is why members of my Cabinet and senior advisers gathered at the White House today, at a meeting chaired by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, to lay out their plans for meeting this challenge. The United States is committed to eradicating trafficking in persons, and we will draw on tools

ranging from law enforcement and victim service provision to public awareness building and diplomatic pressure. Because we know that Government efforts are not enough, we are also increasing our partnerships with a broad coalition of local communities, faith-based and nongovernmental organizations, schools, and businesses.

To bring all these elements together and to be sure we are maximizing our efforts, today I am directing my Cabinet to find ways to strengthen our current work and to expand on partnerships with civil society and the private sector so that we can bring more resources to bear in fighting this horrific injustice. In the coming weeks, the White House will build on this gathering on behalf of human dignity. I am confident that we will one day end the scourge of modern slavery because I believe in those committed to this issue: young people, people of faith and station, Americans who refuse to accept this injustice and will not rest until it is vanquished. Today I reaffirm that the United States stands with them and that together we will realize the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation and our country's ideal of freedom.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Regarding the Comprehensive Interagency Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication

March 15, 2012

Dear _____:

Pursuant to section 1055 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, I am providing an update on my Administration's comprehensive interagency strategy for public diplomacy and strategic communication, which was submitted to the Congress in March 2010.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Daniel K. Inouye, chairman, and W. Thad Cochran, vice chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Carl M. Levin, chairman, and John S. McCain III, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; John F. Kerry, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Harold D. Rogers, chairman, and Norman D. Dicks, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, chairman, and Adam Smith, ranking member,