

Journey

14 October

Mr Mayor, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,

Welcome, welcome to the opening of Journey, the exhibition that portrays the story of Elena, a young woman who fell victim to human traffickers.

Human trafficking is a worldwide phenomenon. The exploitation and trafficking of men, women and children is a humanitarian problem on a global scale. It frequently involves cross border organised crime, and flagrant breaches of human rights of those individuals, who are merely looking for a better life.

People who set out with hope and end up being brutalised.

It is usually not easy to identify human trafficking. Possible victims often do not clearly convey the message that they are victims. Situations of human trafficking are therefore not always easy to recognise. Hence the growing importance attached by many organisations, the police in particular, to recognising these situations. The most important factor in identifying human trafficking is to know and recognise the signs. Training is provided to professionals to help improve their ability to identify those signs.

It is not only professionals that play a role in prevention. The public too can play an important part in preventing, identifying and thus combating human trafficking. The general public is still not fully aware of the nature and manifestations of trafficking. Although forced prostitution and loverboys are familiar terms, for many people human trafficking is still a very remote concept and something they believe could not occur on their own doorstep. There are misconceptions about the distinction between human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Many people are still unaware that human trafficking also entails labour exploitation.

Human trafficking can openly occur because many people do not know precisely what it involves and how it can be recognised. It is therefore vital to increase public awareness in order to tackle this crime more effectively.

Public awareness and the role of the media

Although BNRM has not researched the scale of media attention to human trafficking, it seems that reporting on it has increased in recent years. Major human trafficking cases such as Sneep and Koolvis, but also the exploitation of workers on an asparagus farm in Someren in 2009, have been widely covered in the press. The extensive reporting of these cases has contributed to wider public awareness of the phenomenon.

That the media reporting has not been confined to background information is apparent from the enormous media attention for the flight of the convicted human trafficker Saban B. in September 2009.

Although organising public-awareness campaigns on human trafficking is not one of my core tasks, I made an exception this year to mark our 10th anniversary to bring the exhibition *Journey* to The Hague. The exhibition is an ideal vehicle to create and increase awareness of human trafficking.

It gives the general public a unique opportunity to learn about the nature and impact of human trafficking. The exhibition will also reach a wider target group, including people who have no professional or personal involvement. Within that group there are also potential victims (of loverboys for example), potential young offenders, as well as consumers, clients of

prostitutes, and employers. I hope that by reaching this group we will enhance efforts to identify and prevent trafficking happening.

Journey tells the story of a victim in a way that allows visitors to see and experience it for themselves. 'Journey' is made up of seven sea containers with exhibits that tell the story of a victim of sexual exploitation. Each container has been designed by a different artist and portrays one specific aspect of the victim's experience representing the seven stages of the victim's story. As they walk through the containers, visitors can experience for themselves the problems associated with human trafficking. Media coverage will expand the reach of the exhibition throughout the Netherlands and so enable *Journey* to provide spin-offs for wider public awareness.

Journey tells the unique story of one victim who was enticed to the UK under false pretences, where she was then exploited in prostitution. The exhibition is intended to spark a general discussion of human trafficking, including the plight of victims who know in advance that they will be working in prostitution but did *not* foresee they would be exploited. This does not alter the fact that it is a crime. The severity of the exploitation and the repercussions for the victim don't depend on the sector where the exploitation takes place. In that sense 'Journey' will also open eyes with regard to exploitation outside the sex industry. I am very proud to introduce to you the people who have made *Journey* possible and who will be telling you how *Journey* came about and what motivated them.

Emma Thompson- Oscar-winning actress and writer, and chair of trustees of the Helen Bamber Foundation. She is one of the driving forces behind the *Journey* exhibition. She will tell you Elena's story.

Helen Bamber- A life long human rights activist and co-founding director of the Helen Bamber Foundation, that organizes the *Journey* exhibition.

The exhibition will be opened by Jozias van Aartsen- Mayor of The Hague. The Hague represents justice, also for victims of human trafficking.

We have brought *Journey* to the Netherlands to mark our tenth anniversary. And I am proud of the fact that after London, Vienna, New York and Madrid, *Journey* is now here in the city of peace and justice. But of course we could never have done this alone. I would like to thank all those that have made this event possible, starting with the Adessium Foundation and the city of The Hague for their financial but also their substantial moral support. The Helen Bamber Foundation and Emma Thompson as founders of *Journey*. Quiet Storm and all the volunteers who will help to run the exhibition. And of course all the others who have financially or otherwise contributed to the realization of *Journey*. When I first saw *Journey* in Vienna in 2008 its images made a lasting impression on me. The story of Elena is a story of every victim of trafficking, whether it be for sexual or for labour exploitation. This story should be told time and time again, not only to raise public awareness about human trafficking but also to engage the community in the fight against it.

The impression *Journey* makes on all of us will provide the inspiration to continue this fight. And now I am very glad and proud to give the floor to Emma Thompson.