

## **Justice Committee**

### **Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill**

#### **Written submission from the Mission and Ministry Board of the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church**

This submission is made on behalf of the Mission and Ministry Board of the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church in response to the Committee's call for evidence in relation to the above Bill.

The Global Freedom Network Declaration, signed by world faith leaders in Rome in December 2014, states that "Modern slavery in terms of human trafficking, forced labour and prostitution, organ trafficking and any relationship that fails to respect the fundamental conviction that all people are equal and have the same freedom and dignity, is a crime against humanity".

In considering the terms of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill we would wish to align ourselves entirely with that statement and thus support the Scottish Government's practical action and initiative to help eradicate modern slavery. We congratulate you for introducing the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament.

The existence of slavery is a function of poverty, both in the developing world and in our own country and a result of the low value commonly accorded to our fellow citizens and, all too often, to women. We are aware that women (although not women exclusively) are being trafficked into our country and co-coerced into working in the sex trade. We think it important that those who wish to escape from such violence should be supported by being enabled to enter alternative employment, without fear of deportation. We would wish to see similar support for others escaping slavery.

The elimination of slavery will not come about without significant changes to current attitudes and values within our society. There is a need for our society to move from viewing people primarily in terms of their economic worth to a position where people are seen as being inherently of value and where other forms of contribution to communities and the common good are properly and fully recognized. Preventing people being drawn into slavery by providing them with financial assistance and by social restructuring of the kind mentioned above represents a more positive use of limited resources. This is an area where our Churches can help Government in advocating and delivering this agenda.

John F Stuart  
Secretary General  
6 February 2015