CHASTE Celebrates Lobbying Success on Government Trafficking Stance

As Britain commemorates the bicentennial of the slave trade abolition, there is an urgent need to address the plight of millions women, children and men enslaved worldwide today. At a bicentennial reception this week Prime Minister Tony Blair stated his determination to combat human trafficking and agreed to sign the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. CHASTE welcomes the Prime Minister's proposed action as it has vigorously campaigned for signing the Convention which requires States to address trafficking and to support victims.
Each year an estimated 120,000 women and children are trafficked into Western Europe (European Commission 2001). The 'time for a®rest' campaign launched by CHASTE in September 2006 urged the Government to sign the Convention. The campaign sent out over 35,000 cards to supporters who then lobbied MPs and House of Lords members in their thousands.

CHASTE applauds the government's decision and Tony Blair's statement that 'People and child trafficking is an abhorrent modern form of slavery that we are committed to tackling. Signing the (Convention) will enable us to give victims every support and strengthen our efforts to prosecute traffickers.

CEO of CHASTE, the Revd Dr Carrie Pemberton said, 'We are delighted to receive this outcome from the Government expressing the desire to protect the victims of the horrendous crime of trafficking in all its forms – particularly for those caught in sexual exploitation. With the churches now providing two-fifths of the safe housing available to those who have been trafficked, we would urge the government to see partnership funding for these pioneering projects – so that more provision can be swiftly brought into place. We shall now move forward addressing the issues of demand which seem to constantly slip from the attention of media and public alike."

A new initiative for the Churches *Not for Sale Sunday* has been announced by CHASTE to bring these pressing issues to the attention of the wider community. CHASTE is encouraged by this positive move by the Government to realise its pledge during the G8 and EU presidency to shift the agenda forward on trafficking.

In addition to lobbying and spearheading campaigns, CHASTE works closely with a wide spectrum of other anti-slavery societies and government agencies. The largest co-ordinated policing operation this country has ever seen was Operation Pentameter. As a result, 84 trafficked women were rescued. CHASTE participated at a strategic level and now works with the newly formed UK Human Trafficking Centre, the government's central co-ordination for its operations against trafficking.

As an interdenominational forum, CHASTE equips individuals, churches and other groups for effective response to the suffering of human trafficking. For more news about CHASTE or Not for Sale Sunday on the 20th of May see www.chaste.org.uk or contact: contact@chaste.org.uk or Tel. 0845 456 9335 or 07879622925.