Denouncing 'Slavery In The Modern Age,' UN Launches Plan Against Human Trafficking
The United Nations today launched a global action plan to combat human trafficking, with senior UN officials urging that governments worldwide take coordinated and consistent measures to try to defeat the scourge.

The plan, launched at a high-level meeting of the General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York, calls for integrating the fight against human trafficking into the UN's broader programmes to boost development and strengthen security around the world.

It also calls for the setting up of a UN voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking, especially women and children.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told today's meeting that the action plan should serve as "a clarion call" to UN Member States, international organizations and civil society groups of the need to take immediate steps "to stop this terrible crime against human dignity, which shames us all."

The UN has estimated that more than 2.4 million people are currently being exploited as victims of human trafficking.

"It is slavery in the modern age," Mr. Ban said. "Every year thousands of people, mainly women and children, are exploited by criminals who use them for forced labour or the sex trade. No country is immune. Almost all play a part, either as a source of trafficked people, transit point or destination."

The Secretary-General urged countries, philanthropists and others to contribute generously to the new trust fund for trafficking victims.

"The fund aims to help governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide these vulnerable people with protection and support for their physical, psychological and social recovery. After they have been exploited and abused, they should not be punished, too."
The action plan -- which focuses on preventing trafficking, prosecuting offenders and protecting victims -- also stresses the importance of obtaining more research, data and analysis about the problem.

"We must improve our knowledge and understanding of this crime if we are to make good policy decisions and targeted interventions," Mr. Ban said.

He added that the only way to succeed is to strengthen partnerships between States, organizations and programmes, such as the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, known as UN.GIFT (http://www.ungift.org/knowledgehub/) since its creation in early 2007.

In his address to today's meeting, General Assembly President Ali Treki emphasized the human rights aspects of the fight against trafficking.

"Abduction, coercion, trafficking across national and international borders, forcing women and children into sexual exploitation and servitude -- this must not be accepted in today's world," he said.

"As this heinous crime flourishes, thousands of men, women and children are robbed of their safety, their freedom and their dignity. Human trafficking devastates families and tears communities apart. When the history of this horror calls, we cannot let this period be remembered as one in which the global community knew but did not act."