

YOUTH SYMPOSIUM, VATICAN 15.-16.11.2014

Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Social Sciences

Young people against prostitution and human trafficking:

the greatest violence against human beings.

Anna Bartošová was a delegate of Caritas Slovakia, Slovak Republic and was also one of the six representatives who all are members of RENATE Network.

In November this year I was honored to be invited to the conference by the Vatican through Monsignor Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo and Sister Imelda Poole from RENATE.

Around 70 young men and women active in the fight against human trafficking gathered from all over the world and made their voices heard in the Vatican at a youth symposium on the best ways of preventing and supporting victims of this global trade.

Though we saw each other for the first time in our lives I experienced warm friendship, strong commitment and mutual support of the participants. We were joined through experiences we shared on fighting and preventing human trafficking.

Speakers presented their projects and recommendations on how to prevent young people from being victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Through other speakers' inputs I realized the tremendous extent to which modern slavery affects the countries of all of us.

In my topic I covered actual human trafficking situation in Slovakia. I introduced the work of Caritas Slovakia and Stop Human Trafficking Project which mostly aims to reintegrate the victims of trafficking in human beings back to society. My three recommendations on how to prevent youth from falling victims of modern slavery were based on prevention, which we find the key to cut down the amount of victims of human trafficking. I introduced three prevention campaigns we have launched in 2014.

Young survivors of human trafficking from Mexico were also present at the symposium. They shared their very personal, horrific stories with us. What they had to go through was deeply touching. But in the same time I realized that the chance to truly make a difference is here. Everyone in the room has had a role to play.

On the second day of the meeting the Pope Francis came and spoke to us. Then he greeted each of us. I've heard a lot about him but still his humbleness left me speechless. Especially when he bowed his head to me and whispered: pray for me.

Last but not least I would like to express my deep thanks to Sister Imelda Poole and Monsignor Sorondo as well as the organizers of the event for enabling me to attend this great symposium.

