

**Opening Statement by Deputy Secretary of Labor Steven J. Law  
CECC Executive Branch Commissioner**

**Hearing to Consider**

**Combating Human Trafficking in China:  
Domestic and International Efforts  
March 6, 2006**

Chairman Hagel and Co-Chairman Leach, I thank you for holding this hearing that highlights one of today's worst human rights tragedies—the trafficking of humans for labor and sexual exploitation. I also want to recognize Ambassador John Miller and Mr. Roger Plant, both colleagues who I have been fortunate to work with in the global effort to fight human trafficking.

This Commission's legislative mandate is to monitor China's compliance with or violation of human rights, and I am particularly honored to serve as an Executive Branch commissioner on this topic. The abolition of human trafficking is an Administration priority that captured my professional and personal interest.

President Bush has called human trafficking a “modern form of slavery” and fighting to end this horrible practice remains an important goal of this Administration.

Three years ago, President Bush made a pledge before the United Nation's General Assembly to support organizations that are rescuing victims of trafficking around the world and are providing them hope for a better future.

In January of this year, President Bush again demonstrated his commitment to this issue, signing into law the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA). This Act strengthens U.S. efforts to combat trafficking in persons in the United States and abroad, and it places renewed emphasis on the need to halt the trafficking of workers into various forms of labor exploitation. In signing this Act, the President also called upon other nations to take actions against trafficking within their own borders.

In my own Department, we are engaged both domestically and internationally in efforts to combat trafficking in persons. These efforts build upon the Department of Labor's long history of working to protect and assist vulnerable workers. Since 1995, the Department of Labor has provided over \$164 million to fund projects that help to combat trafficking in persons for the purpose of labor and commercial sexual exploitation. In fiscal year 2005 alone, the Department of Labor provided \$38.4 million to fund 13 projects in 18 countries.

As we begin this hearing, I would like to make an important distinction between human smuggling and human trafficking, as both are significant issues for China. The issue of human smuggling refers to the *consensual* endorsement of individuals to be transported to another country by circumventing immigration control. These individuals usually pay large sums of money to be illegally transported out of China. What distinguishes trafficking from smuggling is the presence of *deception, force, or coercion* designed to entrap a person in forced servitude and deny his or her fundamental right to freedom.

Across the world, the transnational phenomenon of human trafficking involves both trafficking for sex and labor exploitation, with a majority of trafficking cases involving some form of forced labor. Individuals are often forced to toil in brutal conditions in sweatshops and other hidden workplaces.

We recognize, however, that in many ways the problem of trafficking in China is unique. While sex and labor trafficking exist in China, factors such as cultural norms, demographic transitions, social policies, and economic conditions make individuals and communities in the country vulnerable to other forms of internal and cross-border trafficking.

For example, we have learned of documented instances of trafficking for forced marriage and illegal adoption in China. Women and girls in rural communities who choose to migrate to urban centers with hopes for better economic opportunities are sometimes tricked by job recruiters, and find themselves forced into marriage or into positions of involuntary servitude.

Moreover, China's one-child policy has allegedly contributed to the internal trafficking and/or abduction of male infants so that families without boys can raise them as their own to continue the family line. Baby girls are also reportedly a target for traffickers who see foreign adoption as a lucrative business.

The highly sophisticated, organized crime networks, where government entities themselves may be complicit, make the clandestine nature of trafficking individuals a complex problem to solve. Yet, as a matter of urgency, immediate action is required to bring an end to this terrible practice.

Given the enormous size of China's population, at 1.3 billion people, there is an urgent need to uncover the scale and confront the problem of trafficking. As migration within and outside the country continues, the problem of human trafficking has the potential to escalate greatly. This is no time to downplay the problem.

As long as human trafficking persists in China, this Commission will remain steadfast in making this issue a focus of its agenda. While the Government of China has recognized human trafficking as a problem, much more remains to be done.

We need to call on the Government of China, neighboring countries, international agencies, and nongovernmental organizations to produce reliable research and data on the nature and magnitude of trafficking so that better policies and programs can be designed and implemented that respond to the country's trafficking problem.

As China positions itself as a dynamic player in the global economy and we continue to expand our trade relations with the country, we must call upon the Government of China to work diligently and earnestly to eliminate this modern-day form of slavery.

A little over a year ago, I had the opportunity to visit one of DOL-funded trafficking projects in India, and it was heartbreaking for me to see the conditions under which some children work and to hear the stories of victims of sex trafficking. At the same time, I was encouraged to witness first-hand the impact of successful programs to help trafficking victims and to see the hope restored in the eyes of children who had been trafficked.

With this, I look forward to hearing the first-hand experience of our distinguished panelists and to learning how their organizations address the indefensible institution of trafficking of women and children in China. Thank you.