

Tena Koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa

Co-chairs, ministers, fellow business leaders and distinguished delegates, it is a privilege to be invited to participate in this forum and have the opportunity to contribute to meaningful action on these issue of modern day slavery and human trafficking.

The majority of my career has been spent in the aviation industry. As a past Chairman of Star Alliance - an organisation enabling the movement of more than 650 million people each year - I'm acutely aware of the opportunities and challenges presented by the movement of people, goods and services around the globe.

We all traveled here today because we chose to, we have the freedom and financial resources to make that choice. But for the 45 million people living in modern slavery today they don't have that choice. They have often travelled across borders or within their countries simply to enable their survival and with the hope of creating a better life for themselves and their families ... only to fall victim to those that would steal their dreams away and exploit their situation for financial gain.

Today I chair a clothing company founded in New Zealand that exports garments to 45 countries around the world. Our clothing is made from a natural fibre, merino wool, grown in the Southern Alps of New Zealand.

We have forged a reputation based on the ethics and sustainability of our business.

Yet the brutal honesty, despite all our efforts, is that I could vouch with more confidence for the welfare of the sheep in our supply chain than I can every person. We pride ourselves as an industry leader in specifying and ensuring how our growers must manage the welfare of their sheep and the stewardship of their land.

Whilst we are equally prescriptive in defining the welfare standards for all the people in our supply chain, ensuring these standards are met is far more difficult. Differing regulations, language, cultural and religious differences, poverty, corruption and unethical behaviour are ever-present challenges.

Yet these ethical issues are becoming increasingly important to our customers, our voters and our children. My son and daughters are far more concerned about what they eat, what they wear, how things are made and the impact our consumption has on the planet and society than I ever was.

And they rightfully are looking to me, and our generation, to show leadership and to have the courage to make meaningful change to help ensure that every citizen of our planet is treated with dignity and respect and is free from exploitation.

We owe it to the next generation to do much better.

Thank you

Nga Mihi