

## The UK approach to Modern Slavery

The UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, has called modern slavery the “greatest human rights issue of our time”. The UK is committed to eradicating modern slavery in the UK and overseas.

We have taken steps domestically to address slavery. Our 2014 Modern Slavery Strategy set the foundations for the action we expect from government, law enforcement and key partners to comprehensively tackle Modern Slavery in four areas: Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare. In 2015, Theresa May, as the then Home Secretary, introduced the Modern Slavery Act ([link](#)), the first of its kind. The introduction of this legislation enabled the UK to consolidate numerous existing slavery and trafficking offences, which had been spread across several pieces of legislation, into two offences under one Act. It provided our law enforcement officers with the necessary tools to tackle this crime: the maximum penalty was increased to life imprisonment to reflect the seriousness of the crime; new measures ensured victims received the support needed. The Act also created the role of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to provide independent scrutiny of the government’s response to modern slavery and to drive best practice.

Our approach is having real impact. We are now seeing the first convictions for the new offences prosecuted under the Modern Slavery Act. To ensure the legislation is fully implemented we are investing £8.5m in building police and law enforcement capability to tackle slavery.

Our legislation also introduced a requirement on large businesses to report on steps they have taken to eradicate slavery from their supply chains. The UK was the first country in the world to introduce such legislation. The Transparency in Supply Chains provision (section 54 of the 2015 Act - [link](#)) applies to any commercial organisation which is a body corporate or partnership, supplies goods or services, has an annual turnover of £36m or more, and conducts business or part of a business in the UK. The Government provides guidance to organisations about how to produce an annual statement of the steps they have taken to eradicate slavery and human trafficking ([link](#)).

The UK welcomes the recent announcement by the Australian Government of its intention to introduce legislation that will make it a requirement for large businesses to report annually on their actions to stamp out modern slavery. The UK Home Secretary was pleased to share the UK’s experience with the Australian Parliamentary Inquiry (follow [link](#) to Submission 13), and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner provided oral evidence to the Committee during his recent visit to Australia ([link](#)).

Tackling modern slavery requires global collaboration: modern slavery often crosses borders, as do the organised criminal networks which seek to exploit those most vulnerable for profit. The Bali Process fosters international cooperation on this issue, especially in the Asia Pacific. The UK supports the Bali Process as an observer.

The UK is looking forward to further collaboration with international partners, including by co-chairing with Australia an international workshop on Modern Slavery, Human Trafficking and People Smuggling in London at the end of August.