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## Geneticists coordinate action to fight against traffic in human beings

November 10th, 2009

Figures are impressive and, at the same time, shameful for the civilized world of 21st century: according to data from the United Nations through the UN.GIFT programme managed by UNODC/UNDD (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), 161 countries are reported to be affected by human trafficking by being a source, transit and/or destination country. The majority of trafficking victims are between 18 and 24 years of age but an estimated of 1.2 million children are trafficked each year. During the time they are victims of trafficking the 95% experience physical or sexual violence, the 79% are trafficked for sexual exploitation and the 18% are trafficked for forced labour.

Traffic in human beings is a serious and complex problem. It is estimated that by 2010, human trafficking will be the No. 1 crime worldwide, ahead of arms trade and drug trafficking. That is the reason why it requires international collaboration, but specially needs effective measures to combat and deter it, to achieve its final eradication.

<u>DNA - Prokids Programme</u> was set up in 2004 by the <u>University of Granada</u> (Spain) to fight against human trafficking in cooperation with the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification, in the USA, and with the contributions of financial institutions such as BBVA, Fundación Botín (Banco Santander) or CajaGRANADA. Its objectives are:

- 1. 1. To identify the human trafficking victims and return them to their families (reunification), or to the place where they are best protected.
- 2. To hamper traffic in human beings thanks to identification of victims
- 3. To gather information on the origins, the routes and the means of this crime (police intelligence), key elements for the work of police forces and judicial systems.

## **Expert Meeting and Agreements**

Experts in genetic identification from Brazil, China, Arab Emirates, Spain, USA, Philippines, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and United Nations (UNODC) had met in Granada (Spain 26th and 27th October 2009) to first Forerunner DNA - Prokids Scientific Group Meeting.

The Group Meeting, supported by the Counsellor of Regional Department for Justice and Public Administrations of Andalusia, has agreed a series of commitments to foster international partnerships for joint action against human trafficking, especially in children.

Work guidelines established in Granada might help to deter this crime in a short and long term, developing and maintaining a National Quick Response Database (QD) with DNA samples obtained from children found outside their families, victims of prostitution, forced labour, militants activities, illegal adoptions, etc., as well as a second Relational or familiar Database (RD) containing the information of missing children, possible victims of the

#### mentioned crimes.

Experts of the participant's countries agreed in the necessity of developing two databases in each country, according to their means and legal framework. They considered it was a priority to start working on it as soon as possible and to coordinate their actions. The DNA-Prokids Programme will provide altruistic collaboration on the following aspects

- 1. Use of shared protocols for DNA sample collection and custody.
- 2. Definition of the common and minimum group of genetic markers to be used in order to make data and analysis compatible in International databases.
- 3. Design and development of database software adapted to DNA PROKIDS requirements and data, to be used national and internationally.
- 4. Offer collaboration to national governments and international bodies, implementing agreements though expert training, sample collection kits distribution (donated by Life Technologies Foundation) and data analysis.
- 5. Commitment to work locally defining needs for implementation of DNA-Prokids programme. This includes: supply of technical equipment, training, design of databases, sample collection and analysis.

Those present are summoned to present their respective works next April in an International Conference to be held in Granada. The Conference will be

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attended by scientists, international organizations, NGOs, heads of security forces and judicial experts.

Source: University of Granada

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