

**109 ILC – 2021**  
**Ghana – Convention No 182**

Chair, I will speak on behalf of the trade unions in the Nordic countries.

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery, a crime and a grave violation of human rights. Ghana continues to be a source, transit and destination country for trafficking of persons. However, the worst form is the internal trafficking of children into hazardous labour. Many Ghanaian children are trafficked from their home villages to work in fishing activities on Lake Volta, some are into street hawking, begging, prostitution, portering, in domestic servitude, artisanal gold mining, quarrying, herding and agriculture. Bonded in labour due to poverty, these children (some as young as 4 years old) are not given the opportunity to go to school and are often ill-treated and malnourished.

While to most of us, these are just stories and statistics we read in ILO publications. In March 2019, CNN, through their “Freedom Project” program, brought into our homes heartbreaking documentaries on the reality of children, engaged in fishing on Lake Volta. Each day they go down that lake to retrieve nets, they don’t know if they will come up alive or become another anonymous corpse at the bottom of the lake. To the “Master”, as the slave owner is commonly called, these are not human beings but simply tools of production. CNN made us realize that these children are visible human beings, they have dreams, they also have names, one of them is Adam, he would like to be in school but he is forced to fish for up to 12 hours a day, 7 days a week with no break.

The Nordic trade unions are deeply concerned about these violations. We urge Government to take immediate action towards elimination of worst forms of child labour, protect children and ensure their rehabilitation. Government should further improve access to free basic education for all children especially in the Lake Volta region.

Ghana has a relatively good legal framework for combating trafficking,( through the Human Trafficking Act and the Human Trafficking Legislative Instrument, 2015). The challenge lies in its application. There is need for deliberate action to provide adequate resources, combined with updates analyses and information about the prevalence. This calls for close collaboration with social partners, traditional rulers and local communities to isolate and address the root causes of these forms of child labour and why they still persist today.

Ghana as the pioneer of colonial freedom on the African Continent is expected to take the lead in eliminating any form of servitude on its soil. All it takes is the political will.

Thank you.