

U.S. State Department honors nun as anti-trafficking 'hero'

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Honored as one of the U.S. State Department's "heroes" in combatting human trafficking, Comboni Sister Gabriella Bottani urged action to fight the situations that make people, especially women and children, vulnerable to trafficking.

Sister Bottani, international coordinator of the Talitha Kum anti-trafficking network of Catholic women's and men's religious orders, was honored June 20 as one of the State Department's 2019 TIP Report Heroes.

Speaking at an event that included the release of the State Department's annual report on trafficking in persons, Sister Bottani identified three "causes and vulnerabilities that contribute to human trafficking":

- "Unequal power structures in our societies, especially regarding women, children and indigenous people.
- "Inadequate migration policies in an increasingly interconnected world.
- "An economic model that exploits human beings and environmental resources for the profit of a few in contrast with the exploitation of the many."

Callista Gingrich, the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, nominated Sister Bottani for the award and spoke at the ceremony, saying the Comboni sister deserved to be among the heroes who are "recognized for their tireless efforts – despite resistance, opposition and even threats to their lives – to protect victims, punish offenders and raise awareness of

ongoing criminal practices in their countries and abroad.”

Talitha Kum, she said, involves thousands of Catholic women religious “working on the frontlines to end human trafficking” in 77 countries.

The 10-year-old network, Gingrich said, has helped rescue victims and has “reached thousands of people through anti-trafficking awareness campaigns.”