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For Immediate Release

The Banu Foundation and C4ADS Collaborate to Combat Human Trafficking Stemming from the War in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, June 29, 2023 – The Banu Foundation, a charitable organization devoted to empowering, protecting, and educating at-risk children and women around the world, partnered with C4ADS to highlight strategies aimed at alleviating and preventing human trafficking in Ukraine and surrounding countries. The ongoing war has exacerbated living conditions for Ukrainians, leaving them vulnerable to human trafficking networks.

On June 14, a panel of experts came together to share effective anti-trafficking approaches across public, private, and civil society sectors. Strengthening partnerships and fostering collaborations within the global security sector were also key highlights of the discussion.

“It will take a public-private-civil society coalition to reduce the transnational threat of human trafficking. Hopefully, together we can help ensure that human trafficking in Ukraine is not an attractive target for criminals seeking to exploit the most vulnerable,” said David Johnson, Executive Director of C4ADS.

Each of the panelists spoke to their organization’s ongoing work in Ukraine and how lessons learned from other crises may be applied to this context. Irina Bukharin, Program Director of Human Security at C4ADS, spoke about the importance of leveraging publicly available information and data to complement traditional methods of anti-trafficking efforts. Heather Fischer, Senior Advisor for Human Rights Crimes at the Thomson Reuters, highlighted the “[Be Safe](#)” digital campaign — a proactive initiative aimed at educating Ukrainians on the warning signs of human trafficking activities and empowering them to seek assistance when necessary. Minal Davis, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence, shared the City of Houston’s municipal response to human trafficking and its impact after the Hurricane Harvey tragedy. Rachel Dotson, Director of Gender and Migration Initiatives at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), discussed gender-based violence, migration issues, and its impacts and risks to children. Renata Parras, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Counsel at Paul Hastings, underscored the crucial role of using education and media as resources to combat human trafficking. She also stressed the potential risk of well-intentioned contributions falling into the hands of illicit actors. James Lewis, Director of Programs at Renew Democracy Initiative, delivered a comprehensive update on the ongoing war in Ukraine, emphasizing the need for continued global attention on Ukraine even as the conflict continues into its second year.

Attendees represented the following organizations: ECPAT-USA, Sierra Nevada Corporation, Human Trafficking Legal Center, World Bank, Every Woman Treaty, National Center on Sexual Exploitation, The United States Air Force, FTI Consulting, Georgetown University, George Washington University, Middle East Institute, Partners of the Americas, State Department, Amazon, and more.

The Banu Foundation and C4ADS are deeply committed to shining a light on human trafficking networks, both in Ukraine and around the world. For more information about their work, please visit BanuFoundation.org and C4ADS.org.

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About The Banu Foundation

The Banu Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization devoted to three goals: empowering, protecting, and educating at-risk children and women around the world. The Banu Foundation was founded in 2007 by Anna Mehrabi and family and is headquartered in Washington, DC. The Foundation is currently focused on combating human trafficking through a series of educational events and anti-trafficking initiatives in various regions of the world. The Banu Foundation also works with local partners to teach trafficking safety and awareness in schools. Additionally, the Banu Foundation collaborates closely with legal experts to study trafficking as a human rights violation, and has utilized the power of entertainment and media to raise awareness of the unrecognized realities of human trafficking.

About The Center for Advanced Defense Studies (C4ADS)

C4ADS is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit with a mission to defeat the illicit networks that threaten global peace and security. Powered by our cutting-edge data and technology capabilities, we produce compelling analysis to target illicit networks that operate across borders to destabilize communities, prevent development, and devastate the environment. We grow our data-driven analysis into impact by building trusted partnerships with public, private, and civil society stakeholders and engaging with audiences around the globe. In doing so, we create unified, systemic responses to illicit networks and the underlying drivers of conflict, instability, environmental crime, and human rights abuses around the world.

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