

REGIONAL COMMITMENT AND ACTION PLAN OF THE EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION AGAINST COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

Adopted at: the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Consultation for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Bangkok, Thailand, 16-18 October 2001



Artwork by: artist unknown, ECPAT Spain

I. Our Progress and Concerns:

1. We, the delegates of 25 governments, in cooperation with United Nations agencies and bodies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), representatives of young people, other entities and observers, met at the East Asia and Pacific Regional Consultation from 16 to 18 October 2001 in Bangkok, Thailand, in preparation for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children to be held in Yokohama, Japan, from 17 to 20 December 2001.
2. We took this opportunity to review the progression of our work five years after the First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children convened in Stockholm in 1996 and to consolidate our partnership, together with members of civil society, including young people, against the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), including child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking for sexual purposes.
3. We reaffirm the spirit of the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action, adopted by the First World Congress. More specifically, we note the seriousness of the problem of the CSEC as a result of multiple factors, including greed and power abuse, on the one hand, and of the decline in values, on the other. Therefore, we emphasize that strong government commitment and support, in cooperation with civil society that are responsive to our cultural wisdom and ethical values, are imperative for viable and lasting solutions to the problem of CSEC.

4. We recognize the achievements, wisdom and efforts of children/young people in the fight against CSEC, and we will continue to support their meaningful participation.
5. We underscore the rights of the child and recognize the developments in the East Asia and Pacific countries since the First World Congress, bearing in mind the following positive aspects
 - The undertaking, on the part of all countries of the region, to recognize and guarantee the rights of the child embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child in a comprehensive and holistic manner;
 - The participation of countries of the region in a number of key regional/sub-regional commitments to protect the child from CSEC, notably in Resolution 53/4 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on Elimination of Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth in Asia and the Pacific (1997); the Bangkok Accord and Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Women adopted by the Regional Conference on Trafficking in Women (1998); the Asian Regional Initiative against Trafficking (ARIAT) Regional Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2000); the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Asia-Pacific Seminar of Experts in Preparation for the World Conference against Racism: Migrants and Trafficking in Persons with Particular Reference to Women and Children (2000); Resolution 57/1 of ESCAP on a Regional Call for Action to Fight the Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in Asia and the Pacific (2001); the Beijing Declaration on Commitments for Children in the East Asia and Pacific Region for 2001-2010 (2001) supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); and the Declaration on the Commitments for Children in the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2001);
 - The contributive role played by countries of the region in developing international norms and new instruments for child protection, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No.182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1998); the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000); and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000);
 - The adoption of a number of activities at the regional level to implement the Declaration and Agenda for Action of the First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children ("The Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action"), in particular the ESCAP Human Resources Development Course for Medical and Psychosocial Services for Sexually Abused and Sexually Exploited Children and Youth, and region-wide support from many governments and intergovernmental organizations, in cooperation with civil society, for programmes against CSEC;
 - The broad participation of civil society, including international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in action against CSEC;
 - The higher priority-setting to address the issue of CSEC and its linkage with drug abuse and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS;
 - The evolution of national plans of action against CSEC and more transparency concerning such situations in some countries;
 - The greater involvement of the private sector in measures against CSEC;
 - More mobilization of young people to promote and protect their rights against CSEC, as highlighted especially by the International Young People's Participation Project against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children;

- More emphasis on law reform, law enforcement, policy implementation, as well as bilateral and multilateral legal cooperation in combating CSEC;
 - More activities aimed at the prevention of CSEC to address the root causes, such as poverty, family disintegration, as well as gender and other forms of discrimination, negative traditional practices, and criminality; and
 - More efforts to build the capacity of the relevant authorities and community watchdogs to protect children, in addition to child-sensitive facilities and effective recovery and reintegration measures.
6. We welcome the convening, in Yokohama, of the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be hosted by the Government of Japan, support the process to ensure more effective actions against CSEC, and invite the Second World Congress to take into account this Regional Commitment and Action Plan.
 7. We acknowledge that much remains to be done to protect the rights of the child and to eliminate the demand that fosters CSEC, and we abhor the existence of CSEC and emphasize our concern regarding this situation in the region and beyond. In this respect, we note that many countries in East Asia and the Pacific, especially Pacific Island countries, do not yet have national plans of action against CSEC, as well as the related national focal points and data, even though these are called for in the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action. There is also a lack of integrated data, information and related networks to provide inputs for policy formulation and programming against CSEC.
 8. We recognize the need to identify new and more adequate measures for the prevention of CSEC, protection of children who are vulnerable to CSEC, recovery and reintegration of child victims, and young people's participation against CSEC.

II. Our Regional Commitment:

- I. We commit ourselves to taking action on the following:
 - Ensure effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action and undertake to provide sufficient resources for this purpose;
 - Support the process leading to the Second World Congress;
 - Encourage early ratification of the relevant international instruments for child protection, including ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;
 - Aim for integrated and comprehensive measures against CSEC;
 - Improve laws and related procedures, policies, programmes and mechanisms, and train personnel against CSEC, while treating sexually exploited children as victims and not as criminals;
 - Address the interrelationship between CSEC and child trafficking, and improve laws to combat the phenomenon, while ensuring that the child victims of trafficking are not classified or treated as illegal immigrants and that they are able to access support systems to protect their security and safe return home;
 - Enhance cooperation and coordination against CSEC among governments, NGOs and others members of civil society, the private sector, the media, intergovernmental organizations, including regional organizations, and young people;

- Improve research and data gathering to inform policy and programmes to address CSEC;
- Improve the monitoring process at all levels concerning CSEC and ensure its sustainability; and
- Strengthen young people's meaningful participation against CSEC and support their activities and networks on child protection.

III. Our Regional Action Plan:

1. We underscore that all services and programmes should be child-, gender- and culturally sensitive, and that child/young people's participation, including CSEC survivors and those vulnerable to CSEC, should be mainstreamed into all activities concerning children/young people.
2. We undertake to act on the following, to the maximum extent possible:

A. Child/Young People's Participation:

- Identify or establish, by 2004, child/young people's committees, which are independent advisory and consultative bodies to the government on legislation and issues pertaining to children/young people;
- Build the capacity of children/young people and adults to ensure that children/young people's participate meaningfully in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of relevant government policies and programmes;
- Ensure the participation of children/young people in research on CSEC, and conduct research on their views on the actions against CSEC; and
- Allocate resources, to the maximum extent possible, to support child/young people's participation initiatives on prevention, protection, cooperation and recovery/

reintegration at local, provincial, national, regional and international levels.

B. Coordination and Cooperation:

- Urge countries, especially Pacific Island countries, that did not attend the First World Congress, to adopt, by 2004, the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action;
- Adopt, by 2004, national plans/agendas of action, incorporating long-term strategies, and develop indicators, in accordance with the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action, and identify, or if necessary designate, a national focal point in each country, with effective implementation measures and data bases;
- Establish and implement, by 2004, Memorandum(s) of Understanding or agreement(s) to combat cross-border trafficking of children with comprehensive measures;
- Organize national and regional monitoring meetings, involving all relevant stakeholders, to review and evaluate progress in 2003;
- Consider the identification of a regional focal point to encourage adoption of the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action and related implementation;
- Develop and encourage partnerships and networks among governments, law enforcement authorities, including INTERPOL and ASEANAPOL, NGOs, children/young people, community leaders, aid agencies, and the private sector;
- Establish channels for inter-country and inter-regional sharing of information to combat CSEC;
- Endeavour to link government monitoring of the implementation of the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action with other related monitoring efforts, such

as reporting mechanism on CRC and other regional commitments;

- Request ESCAP and UNICEF to monitor the implementation of the Agenda for Action, with assistance from ECPAT International's existing services of data collection and analysis;
- Assess the effectiveness of national action plans in order to share experiences on drafting and implementation and to facilitate follow-up actions;
- Encourage sub-regional and regional agencies and organizations, such as ESCAP, ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, to concretize measures against CSEC, including effective implementation of various existing resolutions and declarations on children/young people; and
- Call upon donors to support child participation, prevention of CSEC, and the recovery and reintegration of child victims through their long-term commitment.

C. Prevention:

- Implement/strengthen programmes that address poverty, family and community disintegration, gender discrimination, discrimination against indigenous and minority communities, and recover and reinforce positive cultural wisdom and practices which protect and promote the rights and dignity of women and children, as well as reduce practices and attitudes which negatively impact women and children;
- Promote better access to education for all children, more education on the rights of the child, and awareness-raising against CSEC and its linkage with drug abuse, STDs, including HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and sexuality, aiming at a process to promote the child's personal growth and self esteem, aimed at harm avoidance;
- Promote a humane socialization process and related actions to foster positive attitudes and behaviour to prevent CSEC and to counter demand for CSEC;
- Integrate the issue of CSEC into both formal and non-formal/informal education;
- Reaffirm the importance of the family and strengthen social protection for children/young people and families more concretely through sustained information campaigns and community-based surveillance/monitoring of CSEC, with particular attention to protection from exploitation;
- Undertake media and public awareness-raising campaigns to change attitudes that support CSEC and to eliminate the stigma against survivors of CSEC;
- Support media personnel in maintaining media ethics and practices consistent with the rights of the child, including respect for the child's/young person's privacy, and as partners for children's/young persons' protection;
- Provide technical and financial support to community leaders and both formal and informal networks, including religious leaders, media, ethnic associations and community workers, to counter CSEC;
- Consolidate local, national, sub-regional and regional actions to prevent and counter CSEC, and monitor their impact on children/young people and their families, with effective follow-up;
- Recognize that child-sensitive laws are an essential part of action to prevent CSEC and support their development and implementation; and
- Develop and publicize relevant laws that prevent the exploitation of children/young people through information technologies and other channels of communication, including the use of videotapes and the Internet for child pornography.

D. Protection:

- Encourage region-wide adoption/ratification of international treaties and other instruments concerning child protection and ensure their implementation and monitoring;
- Enact/improve laws, policies and programmes promoting and protecting child rights and ensure effective implementation and enforcement of relevant laws, especially criminal and civil laws;
- Ensure that, under national immigration laws, child victims of trafficking are treated humanely, and ensure effective coordination among all relevant agencies;
- Encourage cross-border/transnational cooperation and sharing of information among law enforcement authorities against CSEC;
- Develop and implement child-sensitive judicial systems and programmes to protect child victims and child witnesses;
- Adopt innovative responses to counter the negative aspects of technology, such as the transfer of child pornography via the Internet;
- Strengthen the capacity to combat CSEC of law enforcers, members of civil society, especially children/young people, NGOs, teachers, media, community groups and volunteers, and the private sector, through increasing awareness and training concerning child protection, international instruments, national laws and policies;
- Provide a supportive infrastructure for law enforcers and members of civil society to report and to counter commercial sexual exploitation of children;
- Reinforce existing structures and mechanisms for child protection and explore the possibility of using, for this purpose, Ombudspersons, local task forces and special police units, as well as child support systems;

- Encourage and support more child/young people's participation in combating CSEC, including their involvement in local task forces and/or the establishment of their own task force to pro-actively protect children; and
- Develop and support a research agenda on CSEC and encourage the inter-country sharing of information.

E. Recovery and Reintegration:

- Ensure that all programmes respect and respond to the diversity of children/young people's situations and backgrounds and the unique position of each child/young person, and include them as active partners in their own recovery and reintegration;
- Provide/strengthen wide-ranging and effective services for the child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, which are gender-, child- and culture-sensitive, including peer counselling, hotlines/helplines in local languages, shelters, medical treatment, and psychosocial counselling;
- Develop, in partnership with universities and service providers, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including impact indicators, as part of the design of recovery programmes;
- Recognize that reintegration is a long-term process, requiring psychosocial support, job training and placement, destigmatization, and programme monitoring and follow-up;
- Ensure that reintegration involves a variety of stakeholders, particularly the child/young person, family, community, NGOs, and religious organizations, and that the political will of governments is responsive to this issue;
- Train health and social service providers, religious and community workers, and indigenous healers in the provision of child-friendly services, including medical

and psychosocial services, care for care-providers, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse programmes, and life skills development;

- Provide community-level training programmes concerning the rights and interests of the child on areas such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international rights-related instruments, parenting, communication, peer counselling, and training of trainers, directed at teachers, parents, children/young people, and community leaders;
- Recognize social work as a key profession and strengthen professional and para-professional training programmes, including skills in assessment, counselling, case management, and impact evaluation of programmes;
- Call upon donors to recognize that recovery and reintegration are long-term processes, and to commit their support accordingly in partnership with key stakeholders;
- Recognize universities and other educational institutions as key partners in the recovery and reintegration processes, including training and research.