

Conference on Preventing Trafficking in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations

Who is responsible?

Recommendations

Place and date: Zagreb, Croatia – June 2-4, 2006

Organised by: Centre for women war victims – ROSA, Women's room - Centre for sexual rights - Centre for Women's Studies

From June 2-4, 2006, 52 representatives from 16 countries, mainly from the South Eastern Europe region, met in Zagreb, Croatia, to participate in a conference on Preventing Trafficking in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations: Who is Responsible?

The conference was part of a larger project jointly coordinated by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) and the European Women's Lobby (EWL) in partnership with many frontline NGOs and individuals to address gaps in anti-trafficking programs and policies: the links between prostitution and trafficking, the importance of programs and policies that are based on gender equality, the legal status of the sex industry, and the male demand for prostitution that promotes sex trafficking.

These recommendations, agreed to after extensive discussion, are addressed to governments, INGOs and NGOs and concerned members of civil society.

Preamble:

Many of our governments might eagerly sign different protocols and create national programs to combat trafficking.

However, we urge them to include the active participation of women in civil society to implement and monitor these agreements, particularly countries' compliance with their ratification of the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, Article 6 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the 2000 UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol).

NGOs, in particular, play a critical role in implementing and monitoring these agreements. Women's groups in the South Eastern Europe region have already proved their commitment to eradicate trafficking and sexual exploitation, and governments should acknowledge the critical roles they are already playing in all aspects of this campaign.

Strengthening human rights for women in all areas is both a short and a long-term strategy in working against trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Recommendations:

1. The links between trafficking and prostitution:

As recommended by the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in her 2006 report, by NGOs working to abolish sex trafficking and sexual exploitation and by key governments, all governments should recognize and resist attempts to legalize the system of prostitution and the sex industry. Prostituted women should be decriminalized, but pimps, procurers and buyers of commercial sexual activities should be held accountable by law.

2. Recognition of the role of civil society

Governments should more systematically partner with NGOs and civil society who are actively involved in anti-trafficking work, particularly around the determination and implementation of national action plans, anti-sex industry legislation and laws against all forms of sexual exploitation. As part of this partnership, the volume and quality of information between government agencies, international organizations based in the region and NGOs should increase. Financial support for women's human rights organizations in countries in transition should increase and be awarded on a long term basis to promote higher participation of women in the processes of democratic reconstruction of the societies.

3. Implementing a zero-tolerance policy in peacekeeping and humanitarian aid

Governments that contribute to peacekeeping operations should publicize the UN policy of zero tolerance for the use of prostituted women by UN peacekeepers and personnel, train their peacekeeping forces, implement the policy, and take responsibility for punishing abusers.

4. Legislation

Governments should legislate against the male demand for prostitution by penalizing those who buy women for prostitution purposes. The Swedish law defining prostitution as a form of male sexual violence against women and children has demonstrated that a country that penalizes the demand reduces trafficking and creates a chilling climate for traffickers to set up expanded prostitution operations within a country.

5. Protection of victims

Governments must recognize that women who are abused in the trafficking process are victims of violence against women and not criminals.

In areas of military conflicts and post-conflict transition, governments should provide women victims/survivors of violence and sexual exploitation with protection and assistance, compensation, and other aid to ameliorate the trauma of rape, trafficking and prostitution and help women reintegrate into society.

Governments, international agencies and the UN should support trafficked women to stay in the country of their choice and if they choose to be repatriated, they should be given shelter, financial assistance and job training so that they are not re-trafficked or sexually exploited.

6. Justice system

Cooperation between prosecutors and NGOs is important to defend victims and investigate and prosecute cases of traffickers and other perpetrators of sexual exploitation.

Governments should create a national center and databank on trafficking.

7. Fair and sustainable economic development

Governments, international agencies and the UN should not allow South East Europe to become an open door for sex tourism.

Countries in conflict, and post-conflict countries in transition, should promote economic development and an economy of tourism that, in the words of the Albanian Women's Media Group, says "Yes to cultural tourism, no to sex tourism." Demand countries of origin, countries that are richer and sending countries for sex tourists, should develop and implement strong measures against sex tourism agencies, measures that prohibit this international promotion of prostitution.

8. Role of female politicians and the need for feminist women in decision making

Female politicians especially should support feminist issues and feminist legislation against trafficking and the system of prostitution.

Feminist organizations should promote feminist women within political parties to be party candidates and to be elected.

9. Strengthening grassroots organisations

International organisations, such as the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), receive large amounts of anti-trafficking funds from governments around the world and should recognise the expertise of local grassroots women's NGOs and the work they have already developed in combating violence against women and women's human rights. They should financially support the work of local NGOs working against trafficking instead of setting up their own NGOs who have no experience in working against trafficking and sexual exploitation.

IOM has unfortunately had a history of awarding funding and partnering with researchers and organisations that advocate legalization of prostitution and the sex industry. Governments should re-direct IOM funding to generous and long term financing of local women's organisations who work on strengthening women's human rights, especially the right to lead a life free from sexual exploitation.

10. Media

Journalists' associations should promote codes of conduct to encourage media to stop promoting sexual exploitation through advertising, pornography, and pro-sex industry reporting about prostitution and sexual exploitation.

Articles that are not written by HRWF staff or correspondents are not endorsed by the organization.

They are purely distributed for information of parties interested in religious issues and trends.