



**EQUALITY NOW**

## **JOINT STATEMENT**

### **A CALL ON GOVERNMENTS FROM WOMEN'S ANTI-TRAFFICKING GROUPS AROUND THE WORLD TO MAKE SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS FOR STEPS THEY WILL TAKE TO END SEX TRAFFICKING**

#### **THE VIENNA FORUM MUST DELIVER MORE THAN MERE RHETORIC**

**Vienna, 13 February 2008:** The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), Equality Now, The European Women's Lobby, and grassroots groups from around the world, all working to end trafficking in women and girls, are jointly calling on governments to use the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking (13-15 February 2008) organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as a venue to generate significant political will and commit resources to ending the scourge of human trafficking.

The Vienna Forum is a significant opportunity for governments to strategize on ways to end human trafficking and facilitate a global exchange of strategies and best practices that results in setting concrete deadlines, and clear plans for the future. We are concerned, however, that the Forum will not fully address the causes and specific dimensions of trafficking in women for sexual exploitation and will shy away from addressing the commercial sex industry and its dependence on human trafficking.

According to UNODC, a majority of individuals trafficked worldwide are women and children who are particularly vulnerable to being sold in the sex industry as a result of deception, coercion and force due to poverty, the abuse of a position of vulnerability, gender-based violence and discrimination<sup>1</sup>.

In order to combat the trafficking in women, governments and the United Nations must address sex discrimination and put into place and adequately fund measures that ameliorate the socio-economic, political and legal conditions of women and girls. States must also exhibit the political will to develop effective tools to prosecute traffickers, protect trafficking victims, and fully address the demand for women and children for sexual exploitation. We urge the UNODC to ensure that the meeting in Vienna will present concrete plans to address all these issues.

As is set out in the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, adopted in 2000 in Palermo, Italy (the Palermo Protocol), governments are obliged to adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, which leads to trafficking. We believe that criminalizing the demand for prostitution, as has been done in Sweden, South Korea, and Nepal, is the most effective way to address the problem of sex trafficking. Yet in most countries men buy women for prostitution purposes

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<sup>1</sup> 87 % of reported victims of trafficking have been trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation according to the UNODC report *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns*, UNODC 2006, graph 16, p. 33

with impunity while those who are bought, mostly women and girls, often bear the brunt of criminal prosecution. These women and girls should be given educational and employment opportunities, as well as exit and rehabilitation services, while those who exploit them should be held accountable under the law.

Those countries that have legalized prostitution should recognize the integral link between prostitution and sex trafficking, and that they are creating profitable markets for traffickers. It may be that not all women in prostitution are sex trafficking victims, but all sex trafficking victims end up in prostitution, an industry fueled by the demand for women for the purpose of sexual exploitation.<sup>2</sup> The definition of trafficking in article 3 (b) of the Palermo Protocol, specifically acknowledges that the consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation shall be irrelevant where any of the means have been used.

Grassroots women's groups around the world have been at the forefront of the fight against trafficking in women, with little financial support. While reports indicate that the Vienna Forum is costing over \$4 million, very little, if any, consideration is given to survivors of sex trafficking or to the groups on the frontlines who advocate for, rescue and assist these women to rebuild their lives. Governments should take into consideration the expertise of grassroots groups while planning their measures. We have keen knowledge and insight about ground realities, which is vital to creating effective and appropriate policies. Yet there is little or no room for these groups at the table in Vienna, a lost opportunity for governments to learn from those on the ground working to end sex trafficking. We are particularly concerned that requests for a panel of sex trafficking survivors at the Vienna Forum were rejected by the UNODC organizers. Governments have consequently been denied an important opportunity to hear their voices.

The Palermo Protocol recognizes as traffickers those who prey on the vulnerability of women and children. In the past decade, a significant body of legal and policy work on human trafficking has been developed and many governments have initiated measures and programs to address this international crime. We call on governments and the UNODC to use the Vienna Forum as an opportunity to display their political will and begin actually implementing plans of action to end human trafficking, in particular the trade in women for sexual exploitation. There has been enough talk and too little action, and the millions of dollars used to organize the Vienna Forum should be matched by the channeling of desperately needed and strategically placed resources to grassroots organizations working on the front lines.

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<sup>2</sup> In her 2006 Annual Report The UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, stated that it is not necessary for the demand itself to lead to trafficking; rather, it is sufficient that the exploitation fostered by the demand leads to trafficking,

## **JOINT STATEMENT SIGNED BY:**

- Apne Aap Women Worldwide, India
- Associazione Iroko Onlus, Italy/Nigeria
- Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, Bangladesh
- Buklod Center, Philippines
- Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers/Association Canadienne des Centres contre les Aggressions à Caractère Sexuel, Canada
- Center for Women's Human Rights, Republic of Korea
- Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, Perú
- Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, USA
- CLADEM-Guatemala, Comité de América Latina y El Caribe para las Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer en Guatemala
- Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International
- Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Asia-Pacific
- The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Sheppard
- Danish Women's Society, Denmark
- DEMUS - Estudio para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer, Peru
- Equality Now
- European Women's Lobby (represents 4000 women's organizations throughout Europe)
- Feminist Coalition Against Prostitution, UK
- FRESIA - Fuerza contra la Explotación Sexual de Infantes y Adolescentes, Peru
- Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS), USA
- Guild of Service, India
- Impulse NGO Network, India
- INSGENAR - Instituto de Género, Derecho y Desarrollo, Argentina
- Krisesentersekretariatet, The Secretariat for the Shelter Movement in Norway (Umbrella for 34 Shelters)
- Kvænnaathvarfið (The Women's Shelter), Iceland
- Kvinnefronten (The Women's Front), Norway
- Kvenréttindafélagið The Women's Rights Association, Iceland
- Machon Toda'a - Awareness Centre, Israel
- Maiti Nepal
- Milenia Radio, Perú
- Miramed Institute, USA and Russia
- Mouvement pour l'Abolition de la Prostitution et de la Pornographie et de toutes formes de violences sexuelles et discriminations sexistes (MAPP), France
- Movimiento El Pozo, Peru
- The National Committee of UNIFEM in Iceland
- Network Against Prostitution and Trafficking (Netverk mot prostitusjon og handel med kvinner), Norway

- Observatorio de las Mujeres de la Agencia CERIGUA, Guatemala
- The POPPY Project (Eaves Housing for Women), UK
- Prajwala, India
- Prostitution Research and Education, USA
- Reden Stop Kvindehandel (The Nest/Stop Trafficking), Denmark
- The Resource Centre for Women, “Marta,” Latvia
- ROKS, Sweden
- Ruhama, Dublin, Ireland
- Sanlaap, India
- Stigamot, Iceland
- Tandem Project, USA
- Taskforce on Human Trafficking, Israel
- UNANIMA International
- Women’s Counselling, Iceland
- Zero Tolerance Trust, Scotland