

Stockholm Congress Regional Meeting: Africa

We, the African delegates participating in the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) held 27-31 August 1996 in Stockholm Sweden, which highlighted the global nature of commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and how countries are mobilizing against this threat to the well-being of children, are deeply concerned about the problem and the magnitude of CSEC. We note with concern that the issues respective to Africa were not fully discussed and reflected in the Draft Declaration and Agenda for Action.

The delegates also noted that the definition of 'commercial' limits the problem. Sexual exploitation of children in all its forms, whether 'commercial' or 'in-kind' should be prevented and combated. It was also noted that many of the problems of poverty were exacerbated by programmes such as economic structural adjustment programme and the heavy debt burden.

We endorse statements made by the regional consultations which were held in Pretoria, Abidjan and Larnaca.

We, from the African countries, consider the following factors as intimately related to the problem:

1. The poverty that is prevalent within the continent makes commercial and other forms of sexual exploitation easy to perpetrate.
2. The hidden character of the practice, which results in the scarcity of data, makes it difficult to appreciate the magnitude thereof.
3. The growing tourism trade, with sophistication of the information technology, encourages paedophiles and other sex offenders to evade ordinary networks within countries.
4. National and international armed conflicts are major contributory factors in the aggravation of the problem.
5. Harmful traditional practices and family dysfunction are additional aggravating factors.
6. Gender inequity is an important factor in the sexual exploitation of children.

Therefore we, the African delegates to the World Congress, resolve:

- a. To encourage research and to establish networks within Africa in order to facilitate support for countries that do not have the capacity to do this;
- b. To mobilize political, societal will and commitment through regional and continental structures. In this regard, the OAU, especially the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, has a determinant role in bringing the issue to the attention of all concerned;
- c. To develop a framework for collaboration between governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations concerning the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and other relevant international instruments;
- d. To encourage the review and reform of the legal systems, to make for the successful prosecution of offenders and their possible extradition;
- e. To hold an African meeting in 1997 to review country strategies for the elimination of sexual exploitation of children;
- f. To encourage states and all relevant agencies and NGOs to initiate education programmes that will prevent sexual exploitation of children;
- g. To call on states, international agencies and NGOs to make accessible medical and psycho-social rehabilitation for child victims of sexual exploitation;

- h. To call on all UN agencies, particularly UNICEF and the Centre for Human Rights, to support the African programmes aimed at combating the sexual exploitation and abuse of children;
- i. To call on states to support and encourage the ongoing United Nations effort in drafting an Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.