

Report of the Rapporteur-General, Prof. Vitit Muntarbhorn

Introduction

The World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was convened in Stockholm, Sweden from 27 till 31 August 1996.

It was the culmination of a process of global mobilization against the commercial sexual exploitation of children which began in 1994 when the End Child Prostitution in Asia Tourism (ECPAT) Campaign proposed the World Congress. The Government of Sweden offered to host it in cooperation with a variety of partners. The preparations were undertaken jointly between the host country, ECPAT, UNICEF and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The World Congress was preceded by six regional consultations in different parts of the globe which provided direct inputs for the World Congress. A draft Declaration and Agenda for Action prepared for the World Congress was circulated globally prior to the event.

Her Majesty Queen Sylvia of Sweden was the Patron of the World Congress.

The Planning Committee of the World Congress was chaired by Ms. Lisbet Palme and the Secretary-General of the World Congress was Ambassador Tom Tscherning. The Drafting Committee of the World Congress was chaired by Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn. For details concerning the members of the Committees, see Annex 1.

Structure

Her Majesty Queen Sylvia presided over the opening ceremony of the World Congress on 27 August 1996.

Altogether there were 1,341 participants from 125 countries. The participants ranged from government representatives from 119 countries to an array of non-governmental organisations, inter-governmental organisations and concerned individuals. Very importantly, youth from eight countries also participated at the World Congress. For list of participants, see Annex 2.

The World Congress was constituted of two main parts. The first two days were devoted to statements from governments and inter-governmental organisations. These led to the adoption of the Declaration and Agenda for Action by acclamation on 28 August 1996.

The three subsequent days were opportunities for parallel panels and workshops on nine themes, namely:

- Law Reform and Enforcement
- Prevention and Psycho-social Rehabilitation
- Tourism and Child Prostitution
- The Sex Exploiter
- Health
- The Role of the Media
- Children and Pornography
- Education
- Human Values

Background documents complementing these panels and workshops were circulated globally prior to the World Congress. For list of documents, see Annex 3.

In addition, various regional dialogues and a youth panel were held so as to provide more room for discussions concerning regional situations and youth perspectives respectively.

The reports from these discussions formed an important part of the information used for this report. They were presented to the final plenary session of the World Congress.

Her Majesty Queen Sylvia delivered the closing address on 31 August 1996.

Addresses

A number of keynote speeches were delivered during the World Congress. Mr. Göran Persson, the Prime Minister of Sweden, made the opening statement. This was followed by statements from Mr. Ron O'Grady (ECPAT), Ms. Wambui Njuguna (ANPPCAN) and Mrs. Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of UNICEF.

Keynote speeches were delivered by Mr. Ayala Lasso, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; Ms. Anita Gradin, EU Commissioner for Immigration, Home Affairs and Justice; Ms. Ophelia Santos Calcetas, UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children; Mr. Ivan Mora Godoy, Chairman-Rapporteur of the Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights on a draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children; Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS; Ms. Akila Belembaogo, Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Declaration and Agenda for Action

The Declaration and Agenda for Action of the World Congress was adopted unanimously on 28 August 1996. Colombia and Cuba made declarations concerning the text subsequent to its adoption.

The Declaration and Agenda for Action are tantamount to a commitment from the global community to eliminate the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The Declaration calls for all States in cooperation with national and international organisations and civil society to : *inter alia*

- Accord high priority to action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children and allocate adequate resources for this purpose;
- Criminalise the commercial sexual exploitation of children as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children, and condemn and penalise all those offenders involved, whether local or foreign, while ensuring that the child victims of this practice are not penalised;
- Enforce laws, policies and programmes to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation and strengthen communication and cooperation between law enforcement authorities;
- Develop a climate through education, social mobilisation, and development activities to ensure that parents and others legally responsible for children are able to fulfill their rights, duties and responsibilities to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation;
- Enhance the role of popular participation, including that of children, in preventing and eliminating the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The Agenda for Action is a checklist, a set of guidelines for concrete action at the local, national, regional and international levels. Its components include coordination and cooperation, prevention, protection, recovery and reintegration and child participation to counter the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Two time frames are stated as guidance for local and national cooperation as follows:

- a) urgently strengthen comprehensive, cross-sectoral and integrated strategies and measures, so that by the year 2000 there are national agenda(s) for action and indicators of progress, with set goals and time frame for implementation, targeted to reducing the number of children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation and nurturing an environment, attitudes and practices responsive to child rights;

b) urgently develop implementation and monitoring mechanism(s) or focal point(s) at the national and local levels, in cooperation with civil society, so that by the year 2000 there are data bases on children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, and on their exploiters, with relevant research and special attention to disaggregating data by age, gender, ethnicity, indigenous status, circumstances influencing commercial sexual exploitation and respect for confidentiality of the child victims especially in regard to public disclosures.

The Declaration and Agenda for Action are particularly supportive of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and refers to this treaty and other international instruments, recommendations and targets which have bearing on children and their families.

For complete text, see Annex 4.

Key Challenges

The presentations and discussions during the World Congress highlighted a number of key challenges, including the following:

1) Globalisation of the Child Sex Trade

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a global phenomenon pervading both developing and developed countries, although its typology and extent vary per country. It is both national and transnational in dimension, both generational and inter-generational in impact.

The Declaration of the World Congress defines the commercial sexual exploitation of children as "sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons.....(It) constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery".

A major concern is the rampancy of child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking of children - at the national level and across frontiers, in all parts of the globe. Sex tourism is part of the child sex trade, but the tourism in question involves not only international tourism and the advent of foreign paedophiles, but also local tourism and clientele.

Many participants at the World Congress reiterated that poverty cannot be used as a justification for the commercial sexual exploitation of children, even though it contributes to an exploitative environment. A variety of factors interplay with the commercial sexual exploitation of children. These include economic disparities, inequitable socio-economic structures, dysfunctioning families and communities, lack of education, domestic violence, growing consumerism, urban-rural migration and cross-border migration, homelessness and street life, gender discrimination, irresponsible male sexual behaviour, military bases, drugs/substance abuse, harmful traditional practices, racial discrimination, armed conflicts, criminal conduct and activities, corruption, lax law enforcement and a breakdown of human values.

The abhorrent practices behind the commercial sexual exploitation of children include rape, murder, abduction, bribery, false marriage, illegal adoption, illegal immigration, bonded labour, extortion and mail-order brides. It may also arise from domestic service. While the phenomenon affects millions of girls and boys in many settings, it is girls who constitute the majority of the victims, aggravated by deep-seated cultural attitudes that discriminate against women and the girl child.

The practice of commercial sexual exploitation of children is both old and new, although the issue has become more accentuated and critical in recent times. In regard to the former, traditional practices rooted in history include the dedication of girls to temples as sex goddess in various communities - - they then fall prey to sexual exploitation. In regard to the latter, the less positive side of globalisation and the advances of technology and communications have made it more instantaneous and widespread. The more modern side of the child sex trade includes the use of computer bulletin boards and Internet to transfer child pornography worldwide, and the growth of sex tourism.

The geographic areas where the commercial sexual exploitation of children are pervasive, are not stagnant and may shift and change. While Asia and South America have been faced with enormous problems of child prostitution for the past few decades, Eastern Europe has emerged as a new area of concern. Child pornography sources also innovate and rotate between various emission points in North America, Europe, North-east Asia, Central America and the Pacific. Several parts of Africa and the Middle East which were previously pristine, are now becoming increasingly affected by the child sex trade. There is an inherent truth behind this process of globalisation: one should not be deluded by the claim on the part of a certain country or region that it does not have a problem of commercial sexual exploitation of children on its territory, when in fact, its nationals are actually perpetrating crimes for sex with children in other countries. Precisely because the commercial sexual exploitation of children reaches out to all corners of the world, international cooperation is essential to counter the practice and the World Congress itself is part of the mobilization for more international cooperation.

2) Commoditization of Children

The abhorrent practice of commercial sexual exploitation of children treats children as sexual and commercial objects - as commodities for trade rather than as subjects with inherent rights. It is a sad testament to a decline in values, a violation of children's rights, and the spread of criminal behaviour and networks that profiteer from children embedded in corruption and collusion driven by a multi-billion dollar industry. As noted by one commentator in the panel on Human values at the World Congress, "the challenge is to honestly review the moral principles and assumptions of modern society which allow and even promote social crimes like the commercial sexual exploitation of children." There is not only a social, economic and political crisis but also a moral and spiritual crisis in this regard.

While in the past, emphasis was placed on tackling the supply side of the phenomenon, for example, the call for more anti-poverty measures and social development and income-generation for families, the demand side of the phenomenon is increasingly recognised as a pivotal concern. It is the sex exploiters, the customers and the seedy side of the business sector and their chain of allies, such as pimps, procurers, brothel owner and traffickers which must equally be countered and penalised.

Nor are the sex exploiters easily classified as a single, uniform category. In a background paper entitled "The Sex Exploiter" prepared for the World Congress, three categories of exploiters are noted:

- The "paedophile" referring to an "adult who has a personality disorder which involves a specific and focused sexual interest in pre-pubertal children";
- The "preferential child sex abuser" referring to "those individuals whose preferred sexual objects are children who have reached or passed puberty";
- The "situational child sex abusers" referring to those who have sex with a child not because they consistently or consciously seek out children as sexual partners, but because they are "morally and/or sexually indiscriminate" and wish to "experiment" with child sexual partners, or because they have entered into situations in which a) children who match their ideals of physical attraction are sexually accessible to them, and b) certain disinhibiting factors are present which allow them to either delude themselves about the child's true age or about the nature of the child's consent."

An apt caveat was lodged by one commentator at the World Congress "Monsters don't get close to children, nice men do."

However, the categorisation of the "sex exploiter" should be broader than the person who sexually abuses/uses the child. It should encompass the whole range of those who profiteer from the child. As noted by the Declaration of the World Congress:

"A wide range of individuals and groups at all levels of society contribute to the exploitative practice. This includes intermediaries, family members, the business sector, service providers, customers, community

leaders and government officials, all of whom may contribute to the exploitation through indifference, ignorance of the harmful consequences suffered by children, or the perpetuation of attitudes and values that view children as economic commodities."

The demand factor is also linked with the presence of old and new beliefs and values of a perverted kind, for example, the old fixation that by having sex with a virgin girl, one can rejuvenate oneself and the newer fixation that by having sex with the young, one can protect oneself from HIV/AIDS. These contribute to a spiral effect, a destructive vortex whereby the market for sex spirals towards younger and younger children.

During the World Congress, there were many discussions and proposals concerning the countries of origin from where the sex exploiters originate and the countries of destination to which they come, particularly in transnational sex tourism. On the one hand, there is a need for more effective action, more efficacious law enforcement in the countries of destination. On the other hand, action on the part of the countries of origin is also urgently required. This is witnessed currently by the growing acceptance of the need for extra-territorial laws on the part of the countries of origin to penalise the conduct of their nationals who perpetrate sexual crimes against children in other countries. There is also law reform in several countries to incriminate not only production and distribution of child pornography but also its possession.

While the message of law, implementation, enforcement and sanctions was often heard during the Congress against both the demand and supply factors, there was also recognition that substantive laws need to be coupled with cooperative mechanisms such as extradition and mutual assistance agreements, both formal and informal, at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, for evidence gathering, sharing of data and the tracing of the sex exploiters as well as prosecution in child-friendly judicial systems. However, the legal perspective is incomplete when tested from the psychological and socio-medical angle of child sexual exploitation. The mere fact that one manages to convict an exploiter and to sentence him/her to prison does not necessarily lead to behavioural changes. Psychological and socio-medical interventions may thus be needed to treat the sex exploiter as well as to offer long-term monitoring.

A workshop at the World Congress on the theme "Monitoring the Paedophile" highlighted five types of monitoring systems as follows: "1) mandatory treatment post incarceration; 2) registries; 3) community notification; 4) restraining orders against suspected offenders; and 5) screening mechanisms for employment and volunteer positions involving children." However, few countries have this range of systems, and there is more room to explore them -- with adequate resource allocations for early intervention to prevent exploitative behaviour as well as to prevent recidivism.

3) Multiplication of Victims/Victimisation

The number of children victimised by the sex trade are in the millions. Those numbers are not static. Yesterday, it may have been the local children who were the most affected. Today, it may be the children trafficked from neighbouring countries whose fate is substituted for the others. Tomorrow, thousands of their images - mutilated, transmuted - may be transferred by secret codes and anonymous dealers/users who upload and download them in their computer networks as part of international rings of child pornography and the perverse side of the information highway.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is both a consequence and a cause of other ills. The environment that lends itself to exploitation was referred to above and the components include poverty, social disintegration, clandestine migration, discrimination and criminality. From another angle, it should be recognised that the commercial sexual exploitation of children may also lead to other harm. The damage to the child is multiple and may affect ultimately the child's children. It results in serious, life-long and life-threatening consequences for the physical, psychological, spiritual, moral and social development of children, including the threat of early pregnancy, maternal mortality, injury, retarded development, physical disabilities and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. Children with multiple disadvantages such as refugee and displaced children may be vulnerable to further sexual exploitation, thus resulting in

multiple injustices.

Regrettably when the children concerned come face to face with the legal system, they are often regarded as criminals. Frequently it is the sex exploiters who escape from the web of the law while the child victims is caught therein. When the children escape from brothels, law enforcers in some countries treat them as having broken the law outlawing the sex trade. In the case where they are trafficked across frontier, there is the threat that they may be classified as illegal immigrants under the national immigration law, despite the fact that it was the adults who committed the crime. If they are returned to the country of origin, they may again be persecuted for having left the country clandestinely or for having HIV/AIDS even though it was the adult mafia which has trafficked them in the first place. In effect, there is thus double, triple, multiple victimisation of the children.

During the World Congress, the working group on "Laws which protect children" observed as follows:

"The working group stressed the principle that a child which is poor in other resources should be rich in law. It was regretted that in a number of countries the involvement of the child in commercial sexual exploitation was still regarded as an offence for which the child was held accountable. Even those countries in which the child is regarded as the victim of sexual exploitation, the child still had to face prosecution for offences, which were closely related to child prostitution or child pornography, including for example indecent behaviour, or other statutory offences. The common result was that the justice system may appear as the child's enemy rather than its friend. Children subjected to commercial sexual exploitation should be treated as victims and not as perpetrators of crime. The working group further agreed that more child-friendly practices should be applied by police, prosecutors and judges, for example with regard to police raids and interviews of witnesses. Depenalization of the child's victim's activity should be considered."

The victimisation does not only occur in regard to the legal system. There is also stigmatization in the social system, including in the community and the family, against the child who has been a victim of the sex trade. Social mobilization, public education for communities and families, and training of law enforcers and others who may interact with the child victims are thus crucial to nurture a sense of understanding and humane action towards these children.

Intervention to help the child also needs to be integrated, comprehensive and cross-sectoral. A non-punitive approach towards the child needs to be promoted in keeping with his/her rights, taking particular care that legal/judicial procedures do not aggravate the trauma already experienced by the child. The provision of appropriate, effective, accessible, culturally appropriate gender-sensitive and affordable services, including social, medical, psychological/counselling and other supports, to the child and his / her family is essential.

4) Massive Violations of Human Rights/Child Rights

The scenario already presented indicates that the rights of children -- their human rights -- are violated daily across the globe. The commercial sexual exploitation of children is an egregious violation of the child's right to survival, development, protection and participation.

The guiding light for child rights is the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child which has received near-universal ratification. Countries which have not yet ratified the Convention should be encouraged to do instantly. The Convention has key provisions against all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation. It calls for an array of measures - legal, administrative, social and others - to protect the child from sexual exploitation and trafficking. There is both a negative obligation under the Convention to refrain from acts which lead to sexual abuse and exploitation and a positive obligation to take measures and commit resources to their prevention and elimination.

As noted by the panel on law reform and law enforcement during the World Congress:

"The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a common point of reference, providing a general

framework for an integrated approach. The laws in each country which implement the Convention must see children as the subjects of rights, not as commodities. They should clearly define the crimes against them and provide remedies for those wrongs. But laws alone are not enough; they must be conveyed to society. They are only valid if they are living laws. The judiciary, the law enforcement personnel, the police must provide effective judicial processes, and those processes must work fairly in favour of the common good, unaffected by class distinction or the lack of education. It is also true that the organs of state need to be given the principled support of their government with clear priorities and adequate resources."

Implementation of the Convention at the national level, however, leaves much to be desired. There are often inadequate laws and/or lax law enforcement, coupled with corruption and collusion. Resources are not sufficiently allocated to child-related services. The dissemination of child rights in particular and human rights in general is nascent rather than widespread in many communities. It is hampered by the ingrained cultural attitude that children have duties rather than rights and that they should be seen but not heard. Even where there is recognition of child rights, there is a high degree of lip service or tokenism in many areas.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that although the Convention stipulates the age 18 as the threshold between childhood and adulthood (unless by the law applicable to the child, "majority" is attained earlier), at the national level the definition of the term "child" varies markedly between different laws and systems. In several national systems, protection for the child is very much dependent upon the minimum age of consent to sexual acts.

From the angle of child rights and protection from sexual exploitation, however, it may be said that the issue of consent or the age of consent to sexual acts is irrelevant. There is and can be no issue of choice, free will or self-determination in a situation of sexual exploitation, precisely because sexual exploitation is a suppression of choice, eradication of free will and decimation of self-determination.

It would then be wiser to set an effective and higher age threshold for the protection of children from commercial sexual exploitation than those age thresholds currently found in many regions. Several countries have now raised the age for child protection to 18 years of age. In one country in South-East Asia where the problem is rampant, it is encouraging to note that a couple of days ago, Parliament passed a law to raise the age for protecting the child from the previous age of 15 to the new age of 18.

The global mobilization against the commercial sexual exploitation of children and this World Congress are thus essential for complementing the existing international standards, promoting needed reform, fostering enforcement of child-friendly laws and systems and supporting stronger monitoring for transparency and reporting for accountability to key international organs working on the issue. These include, in particular, the Committee on the Rights of the Child established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children mandated by the UN Human Rights Commission.

The Agenda for Action is living proof of this advocacy in that it calls for full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by State Parties, including requirements for reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in accordance with existing guidelines, and encourages follow-up of countries' progress towards full realization of child rights in the context of other relevant UN organs, bodies and mechanisms, including the UN Commission on Human Rights and its Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children. In this pursuit, the Declaration and Agenda for Action of the World Congress also refers to the whole array of other international standards on the issue, such as the 1992 Programme of Action of the UN Human Rights Commission for the Prevention of the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. In addition, it recognizes the process of evolving a possible Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children.

5) Limitations of Mobilization and Action

That the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children has now captured increasing international attention is a most welcome sign of the times. This is due in large part to the focus that the non-

governmental community has brought to the issue. The fact that the World Congress was organized on the basis of a partnership between governments, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and concerned individuals, including children, is a testament to the call for more global mobilization and action. The fact that the Declaration and Agenda for Action of the World Congress was adopted unanimously by the countries participating at the World Congress raises the pitch of political will and priority accorded to the issue both internationally and nationally.

The impetus is not without its share of difficulties. Resources are not sufficiently allocated sufficiently to counter the child sex trade. Even in the poorest countries, there is a tendency to overspend on arms purchases, while the money could be better used for the social development and protection of children. Political will and social will remain limited on several fronts. It cannot be overlooked that a certain number of states did not accept the invitation to participate at the World Congress. Let it be made known to all these states that we call on them, we welcome their fullest participation in adhering to the Declaration and Agenda for Action of this World Congress together with the spirit of all the recommendations and suggestions heard during the World Congress in keeping with child rights as guaranteed internationally.

Although the Declaration and Agenda for Action were evolved through a consultative and consensus process for global convergence, some regions may feel that their particular interests need further emphasis than that found in the current text. For example, South Asian NGOs feel that there should be more recognition that there are other forms of exploitation and sexual abuse of children not involving financial or other considerations which are of equal concern and often precede or are inherently linked to commercial sexual exploitation of children.

It should be noted that the Declaration and Agenda for Action stipulate basic minimum standards, basic minimum guidelines focused on a certain area of exploitation, namely commercial sexual exploitation of children. Where regional and country inputs seek to raise those benchmarks to even higher standards, this is much welcome.

On another front, there remains an ambivalence of values and relationships: there is often a thin line between that part of the community which protects the child from exploitation and the other part which exploits the child sexually. In several societies, parents, families are in this ambivalent position. It cannot escape our notice that sadly the sale of children by families to the sex market has grown in many countries - whether it be the parent in the poor area taking a fee from the middleman or the parent in the rich area who videotapes his or her child for pornographic purposes and circulates it among "the circle." Likewise, the ambivalent role of the law enforcer in several countries.

In spite of these limitations, prevention is possible and much depends upon education, awareness-raising, income-generation, monitoring networks and incentives for behavioural changes to protect the child. The Agenda for Action reinforces this by advocating campaigns to:

- raise awareness and educate government personnel and other members of the public about child rights and the illegality and harmful impact of the commercial sexual exploitation of children, and promote responsible sexual attitudes and behaviour in society;
- promote child rights in family education and family development assistance, including an understanding that both parents are equally responsible for their children, with special intervention to prevent sexual violence;
- foster peer education programmes and monitoring networks to counter the commercial sexual exploitation of children;
- implement gender-sensitive national social and economic policies and programmes to assist children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, families and communities in resisting acts that lead to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, with special attention to family abuse, harmful traditional practices and their impact on girls, and to promoting the value of children as human beings rather than commodities; and reduce poverty by promoting gainful employment, income generation and other supports.

There is also wisdom in this comment from one of the workshops on the issue of Prevention held at the World Congress: "prevention strategies need framework, clarity/goals, to be successfully planned and implemented". This goes hand in hand with knowledge of facts, material contexts and the surrounding environment.

Granted that the commercial sexual exploitation of children may arise from both small scale and large scale activities, and granted that it is also part and parcel of industry - both national and multinational, there arises also a key concern as regards the role of the private or business sector. To what extent can the good parts of the business sector be mobilized, motivated to take action against the bad parts indulging in the child sex trade?

There are some encouraging signs in this respect. The tourism industry has come increasingly to the fore to condemn that part of the industry which abuses and exploits children. In the report of the tourism panel of the World Congress, it is noted that the World Tourism Organization made a statement in 1995 which is used as a basis for government work against organized sex tourism, encapsulated by the caption:

"There would be no child sex tourism if there was no sex tourism."

Innovative experiments against the child sex trade include boycotts against that part of the industry which is exploitative; distribution of leaflets warning against child prostitution; incorporation of these warnings in guidebooks of the travel industry.

The peer pressure and peer examples needed should thus promote more effective implementation of child rights, transparency, accountability and responsibility of operations worldwide in the pursuit of "socially responsible tourism."

The role of community leaders, including religious leaders, and the mass media is key to countering the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Here too there is ambivalence at times. There are members of these sectors who contribute to or participate in the sexual exploitation of children. The abuse and exploitation are not only physical but mental and spiritual. In regard to the mass media, the child's right to privacy is violated by unethical behaviour on the part of some members of the sector. There has also been the Lolita syndrome in advertising whereby images of young children are "commoditised to convey sexuality to sell products in the adult market, to titillate and to tease."

Mobilization of the better parts of these sectors for action should incorporate peer education and monitoring networks to protect children. With regard to religious leaders, there is much room for reinforcing the Convention on the Rights of the Child in non-sectarian terms with the understanding of the child as an ultimate value, an entity that is sacrosanct.

With regard to the media, self-regulation through code of ethics and professional guidelines, the promotion of specialist children's correspondents, and training on child rights for journalists can help to guide the industry to good practices. The computer and communications industry can also self-monitor against exploiters and counter-programme to block or boycott the latter. This may need to be coupled with the evolution of international standards of regulation governing the use/abuse of new communications technologies.

Orientations

The scenarios painted above indicate various realities with which we are faced today. Despite the constraints noted, this World Congress embodies the spirit of hope, action and partnerships to overcome these constraints, rather than defeatism and despair. Key orientations for the future include the following:

A. Child Participation

It is only through child participation that the child's right to survival, protection and development will be realised. To this may be added the maxim that it is only through community and family participation that commercial sexual exploitation of children will be prevented and children will be protected from harm.

There is much insight in the report of the workshop on "skills for communicating with sexually abused and exploited children" of this Congress in its recommendations that:

- "1) Intervention should be based on the perceived needs of children; they should be fully involved in all stages, and in all aspects of projects designed to reintegrate. This means listening to children is the top priority in any approach.
- 2) Discussions with children should not make them feel they are to blame for their situation. They should be fully informed of why any discussions are taking place.
- 3) Adults working with children must understand, respect and use children's own terminology and interpretation of their own situation. This also involves working with the child at his or her own pace.
- 4) For any of these participatory approaches to be effective the attitudes of adults have to change; this will require appropriate training."

This is the process of empowerment which is essential to prevent commercial sexual exploitation. For too long, the children have been made to be silent, to be subservient, to accept the exploitation as their fate. It is high time for them to speak out, speak up and act on the premise of their rights.

The youth panel was clearly the best and most heartfelt event of the World Congress. The young participants offered drama to other participants drawn from real life, e.g. the violence against children, the family abuse which then leads to the ejection of the child from the family and on to the streets, the link between various forms of exploitation, including drugs, inhalants and sexual exploitation. Their message was profound:

- listen to and consult young persons concerning the work against commercial sexual exploitation, to work for solutions;
- respect their views;
- punish those who commit violence against children;
- establish juvenile courts;
- offer protection centres open day and night;
- provide hotlines for help;
- forbid inhalants.

As the Agenda for Action of the World Congress implies, there is a need to:

- promote the participation of children including child victims, young people, their families, peers and others who are potential helpers of children so that they are able to express their views and to take actions to protect children, and to assist child victims to be reintegrated into society;
- support networks of children, including child-to-child peer education programmes, and young people as advocates of child rights, and include children, according to their evolving capacity, in developing and implementing government and other programmes concerning them.

B. Prevention

The need for preventive action cannot be emphasized enough. Yet there is a tendency in many political and budgetary circles to shun committing resources to preventive action, precisely because the impact of

prevention may be difficult to measure in the short term.

This reality was noted by a comment during the Education Panel of the World Congress:

" Politicians press the public continually to shift attention from one simplified problem to another - drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, juvenile crime. But these are only symptoms, developmental detours confronting children, There are no simple or quick solutions; the only way to prevention is education in its most comprehensive sense:"

The drive for political commitment at the highest levels to preventive action is thus crucial. The measures may include the following:

- more access to basic education, bearing in mind the particular plight of the girl child in many communities, and more information campaigns on human sexuality and reproductive health care to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS;
- effective provision of health services, quality education, training, recreation and a supportive environment to families and children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation;
- improved education and awareness raising on child rights for all members of the community;
- mobilization of a wide range of community catalysts - governmental and non-governmental, public and private sectors - as watchdogs against the commercial sexual exploitation of children and as peer pressure for transparency and accountability of all members of these sectors;
- targeted education and outreach campaigns to child sex exploiters to promote behavioural changes;
- adequate resource allocation and capacity-building (financial, human, technology, information, spiritual) for preventive action against sexual exploitation;
- establishment of community-based early warning mechanisms and early intervention to prevent the exploitation.

C. Protection

The call for improved protection of children and their rights is essential nationally, transnationally and internationally. It includes the following yardsticks:

- criminalize and penalise those who sexually exploit children;
- protect child victims from being penalised and ensure that they have access to child-friendly services and personnel;
- harmonise laws between different countries, including the age criteria for child protection;
- criminalise child pornography, including its possession, and computer-based child pornography;
- in the case of sex tourism, promote and implement extraterritorial criminal laws, extradition and other arrangements to prosecute the sex exploiter of children, and ensure effective law enforcement in both countries of origin and destination countries;
- facilitate the gathering of evidence and detection and prosecution of sex exploiters by fostering cooperation between countries, including possibilities for videotaping children's testimonies while ensuring that child rights are respected and that the child is not further traumatised by the process;
- punish child traffickers and in cross-border situations, treat the trafficked children humanely under national immigration laws and ensure their safe return to the country of origin;
- promote community mobilization and advocacy to protect children;
- initiate specialized units or personnel among law enforcers to protect children and train them on child rights;

- train UN personnel and peace-keepers on child rights and protection;- provide hotlines, mobile services and shelter to protect children;
- prepare rescue operations for child victims in cooperation with civil society.

D. Recovery/Reintegration

Interestingly the preferred term proffered by the young persons at the World Congress was "healing". There was a rejection of the label "rehabilitation" if applied to child victims, as this implies that someone has done something wrong, thereby needing rehabilitation. The culprit needing rehabilitation is the sex exploiter, not the child victim.

The process of assisting child victims to heal and recover from the traumas of sexual exploitation should include the following:

- provide comprehensive services - legal, socio-medical, psychological and counselling - to support child victims and their families, while avoiding a punitive approach towards the child;
- allocate adequate resources to these services;
- train health care workers, teachers, social workers and others working to help child victims on child development and child rights, and educate communities and families not to stigmatise or ostracise the child, while facilitating his/her reintegration in society;
- foster alternative means of livelihood to child victims and their families to prevent further commercial sexual exploitation;

E. Information

The need to improve information gathering, processing, collection and dissemination is crucial, especially to help monitor against sexual exploitation and plan programmes to assist and protect children. Some innovations could include the following:

- international/national data collection and exchange on crimes and criminals to facilitate tracing of sex exploiters;
- registration of sex offenders to promote monitoring of behaviour;
- disaggregated data collection of children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, and parallel coverage of their exploiters;
- production of training manuals/handbooks for action to protect children and to ensure child-friendly responses;
- training/education for all power groups which may become the exploiters of children;
- training/education of children, families and communities to prevent and identify the commercial sexual exploitation;
- improved research on aspects of the commercial sexual exploitation of children, e.g. the pathology of sex exploiters and the "successes" of intervention, bearing in mind that such research should be respectful of child rights;
- avoidance of over concentration of information in particular geographical areas (e.g. "Eurocentric" research and presentations).

F. International Cooperation

"International cooperation" was voiced throughout the period of the World Congress. It is a key to the intentions of the World Congress and future action. It implies multi-levelled cooperation, inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral by nature, including the following:

- promotion of alliances between the international, regional and national communities and related agencies to counter the commercial sexual exploitation of children;
- improved coordination/collaboration between government and non-government sectors, including businesses, the media, law enforcers, community leaders, politicians, parents and children, bearing in mind the call for decentralization and support for grassroots initiatives;
- bilateral, sub-regional, regional and multilateral action and agreements (both formal and informal) to monitor against commercial sexual exploitation of children, to detect the exploiters and trace the children affected, to facilitate prosecution and other measures against the exploiters, and to assist the recovery of children ;
- restructuring of international and national development and aid so as to provide more support for child/family related programmes to focus on action against commercial sexual exploitation;
- promotion of technical cooperation to share knowledge/expertise on the issue;
- standardization of procedures for legal/judicial cooperation, e.g. on evidence sharing, on video-taping, and on a non-punitive response to the child victims.

G. Follow-up

The Declaration and Agenda for Action of the World Congress provides for follow-up of implementation of their components by channeling information to existing UN mechanisms. Yet, , the real test of follow-up will be at the regional, national and local levels. Key action at these levels should include:

- plans of action and child-friendly, gender sensitive programmes and measures to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation and to protect children;
- preparation of national/regional reports concerning implementation of the Declaration and Agenda for Action;
- mechanisms/focal points and mobilisation of personnel/communities as watchdogs against the phenomenon;
- expeditious information gathering and reporting so as to be able to plan more effectively and ensure adequate intervention to help children;
- efficacious partnership-building, networking and capacity-building between government personnel and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, businesses, the media, community and political leaders, families and children to counter the phenomenon.

In sum, the most incisive message of the World Congress was pronounced by the young persons themselves during the Congress:

" I hope you will not only listen but you will act."