

This briefing note is a contribution of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ECPAT International to the 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

The co-organizers of the 2nd World Congress

It is widely accepted that one of the most successful elements of the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, in Stockholm in August 1996, was the potential it demonstrated and unleashed for cooperation among governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies.

At Stockholm for the first time these three important sectors in work against commercial sexual exploitation of children not only came together on an equal footing but prepared the Congress together, consulted with their own constituencies and widened the potential for collaboration and information sharing, and began a process which has continued. Since 1996, this collaborative model has spread to other forums.

Planning for 2001

It was clear, then, when the 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was planned, that the same level of cooperation and collaboration would be maintained. So it was that the **Government of Japan** began discussions with the Government of Sweden, UNICEF, ECPAT and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to see what this would entail. In due course the Government of Japan agreed to host the Congress, thus taking up the baton from the Government of Sweden, and the other three partners agreed to become co-convenors. The Government of Sweden has continued to assist the Government of Japan through the lessons it learned in 1996 and has maintained ongoing support to the partners.

Following the Stockholm Congress, the original partners had met to decide how they would ensure that the fruits of the partnership would continue beyond the normal bilateral working relationships that already existed. They decided to create the **Focal Point** on Sexual Exploitation of Children, a small hub within the **NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child**, to act as a focal point for the partners on this issue and a rallying effort for NGOs working in the area of sexual abuse and exploitation. The Focal Point has functioned since 1997 and has nominated regional focal points to ensure that, in as many countries and regions as possible, NGOs and others working in this area are able to meet and share experiences and information, and feed this into a much larger network. The original Congress partners serve on an advisory group to the Focal Point, which now has modest but more diversified funding support and a mandate that takes it beyond consideration of sexual exploitation that is commercial in nature. With the help of its broad outreach, the NGO Group Focal Point provides regular and systematic information to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on States Parties' implementation of the relevant articles of the Convention through the Stockholm Agenda for Action.

Meanwhile, **ECPAT** – the motivating force behind the first World Congress and in many ways the lead agency in bringing the issue of commercial sexual exploitation to public attention – decided in 1997 to build on the strengths it had developed as a loose network of organizations united in the campaign against CSEC. ECPAT became an international NGO, with 60 national members and affiliates who can use the ECPAT name (some do not) and with headquarters in Bangkok, working as ECPAT International. Through its strengthened membership, ECPAT has developed its campaign skills alongside more direct action in the field. ECPAT has also, since 1996, taken responsibility for monitoring progress towards fulfilling the goals of the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action, and has published an annual update of progress and work outstanding.

UNICEF, the lead agency on children's issues in the United Nations system, has also undergone change since Stockholm in relation to sexual exploitation of children. In 1996 sexual abuse and exploitation were handled by the department for Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances that in 1997 became the Child Protection Section. This allows sexual abuse and exploitation to be positioned within a much broader protection framework and facilitates better cross-strategizing of policy and fieldwork on all the issues that relate to it, such as HIV/AIDS and health, gender issues and education. While UNICEF continues to work with NGOs all over the world on this and other issues, it has also strengthened its country and regional offices to work on sexual exploitation through their relationships with governments, social welfare services (for example in research and planning, or in schools programming) and at policy and programming level (for example with other agencies of the United Nations working in this area).

Working towards Yokohama

Since late 2000, the four partners have met as the International Planning Committee (IPC) for the Yokohama Congress. The partners have taken responsibility for ensuring wide support and participation of their own constituents. The Government of Japan has kept governments informed of progress and in June 2001 issued a formal invitation to the 2nd World Congress. UNICEF has kept the UN and other intergovernmental agencies informed and has issued invitations to other UN agencies and regional bodies.

ECPAT has mobilized its network to prepare for Yokohama and has taken special responsibility for the involvement of the private sector, with which it has a longstanding working relationship on this issue. It has also worked with the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child to keep the NGO community informed and prepared for the Congress. The NGO Group has been central in mobilizing its members to organize pre-Yokohama regional meetings; this will ensure not only that the experience of the regions can be harnessed to feed into the Congress but that the results of the Congress will have a ready constituency in the regions to move action against CSEC forward.

One other important partner has been the Japan Committee for UNICEF (JCU), which has worked with the Government of Japan and UNICEF to ensure wide civil society involvement in the Congress in Japan, including through a preparatory seminar in February 2001. JCU has also taken responsibility with the City of Kawasaki for organizing a youth forum that will bring large numbers of Japanese youth together with visiting young people for a pre-Congress meeting in Kawasaki. Each of the partners has also undertaken to facilitate the participation of children and young people at Yokohama, and a youth representative has reported to the IPC on the preparations of young delegates not only for their own meeting in Kawasaki but also for their active participation at Yokohama.