

**ARAB-AFRICAN FORUM AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN
RABAT, MOROCCO, 24-26 OCTOBER 2001**

FINAL DECLARATION

The Arab-African Forum Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children was held in Rabat, from 24 to 26 October 2001, under the Honorary Presidency of Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem, with the aim to prepare for the effective participation of the Arab African region at the 2nd World Conference against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children which will take place in Yokohama (Japan) between 17 & 20 December, 2001. The Rabat Meeting set as its principal objectives: the reaffirmation of the political commitment of the states; the revision of progress since the World Congress of Stockholm (1996); and to devise intervention strategies that reflect on regional specificity and priorities for the effective and efficient combating of sexual exploitation of children. Indeed, the Stockholm meeting was mainly a platform for the creation of global awareness of the problem, which necessitated regional specificity. The five years post-Stockholm highlight the following challenges, and lack of changes, for the countries of the region:

- The subject of sexual exploitation remains a taboo in many countries.
- There continues to be a lack of situational analysis and qualitative and quantitative data collection mechanisms at both local and regional levels.
- There continues to be an absence of multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary approaches and coordination mechanisms in the field of prevention and combating of sexual exploitation of children.
- There continues to be a lack of training in human resources in required disciplines, most notably in the areas of justice, policing, tourism industry, transport, social work, health care and education.
- There is a paucity of programs for the rehabilitation and reintegration of child victims of sexual exploitation.

The root causes of this calamity are poverty, illiteracy and inadequate educational systems, gender discrimination, cultural practices prejudicing children, such as mutilations, and the attitude of many men.

A great number of the countries in the group are victims of armed conflicts, war, military occupation and blockades generating situations dominated by violence, which dramatically increases the vulnerabilities that facilitate the sexual exploitation of children.

The sexual exploitation of children is closely linked to HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, with HIV/AIDS being a cause and a consequence of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

At the close of this forum, we the members of the Arab African countries declare:

Recognizing that :

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the main instrument for the protection and the promotion of the rights of the child.
- As the proceedings took place in the context of the Global Movement for Children and preparations for the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children, the Rabat Arab-African Forum Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children continues the momentum generated by other regional initiatives. Some of these are : The Arab Civil Society Forum (15-19 February 2001), The African First Ladies Summit (Marrakesh 20-22 April 2001), the Arab-African Conference of Finance Ministers (Marrakesh 21-23 Mai 2001), the Pan-African Forum on

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Children (Cairo 28-31 May 2001), the High Level Arab Conference on the Rights of Children (2-4 July 2001) and the 36th Inter-Parliamentary Session (Ouagadougou, 9-13 September 2001). These meetings have allowed for a gathering of various stake holders in Government, NGOs, Private Sector, International and Parliamentary Organizations for the purpose of reflecting on the protection of the rights of children and the respect of their dignity.

- This meeting is part of the framework aiming to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its Optional Protocols related to the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography and the involvement of children in armed conflict.
- The protocols also related to the ILO Convention 182 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labor and to the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. The latter protocol is geared towards the suppression and punishment of crimes related to the trafficking of human beings, in particular women and children.

Considering the great advances realized during these last years, notably in the domains of :

- The commitment of political leadership at the highest levels in many countries of our regions.
- The existence of outlines for national action plans in some countries.
- The adherence of the Governments of the regions to the commitments taken in Stockholm and their determination to be more involved in the process of Yokohama.
- The growing involvement of national and international NGOs (ECPAT, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other competent NGOs).
- The mobilization of adolescent and other youth in the process of the promotion and defense of the rights of the child.
- The progressive generalization of the process of the harmonization of national legislations with the Convention on the Rights of the Child so as not to penalize the victims and protect them while making the authors of acts of sexual exploitation guilty of committing a criminal offense.
- The recognition by all the participants of the fact that the existence of this calamity requires the commitment of all of us.

1. We commit ourselves to and recommend the following:

1.1 Ratify and implement (a) the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two additional protocols, notably the one related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the involvement of children in armed conflicts, (b) the ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labor and Recommendation 190.

1.2 Harmonization of national legal texts with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensuring their enforcement.

1.3 Adapt legal provisions intended to protect children from sex tourism.

1.4 Devise national programmes and projects of prevention, for capacity building (through integrated multi disciplinary training), and detection and treatment of any form of physical and sexual abuse of children.

1.5 Encourage and support the creation of a National and regional observatories to combat sexual exploitation of children.

1.6 Follow-up of actions already undertaken, such as:

- Situation analysis and studies, investigations on the question of sexual exploitation of children; and

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- Raising awareness of national decision-makers of all levels on the problems related to the sexual exploitation of children.
- 1.7 Foster the conscience awareness of adults and children of the rights of the child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, in particular the girl child, for the purpose of changing attitudes and modes of behavior and hence prevent the occurrence of the phenomenon.
- 1.8 Develop strategies and mechanisms for encouraging the participation of the juveniles in order to better protect and defend themselves, notably through sexual education.
- 1.9 Involve travel agencies and tourism ministries of various countries in programs that combat the sexual exploitation of children.
- 1.10 Ensure and strengthen security services, especially at the borders.
- 1.11 Promote peace education in order to prevent armed conflicts, which favor the proliferation of the practice of sexual exploitation.
- 1.12 Promote the strategy of establishing “child and girl-friendly schools”.
- 1.13 Introduce mechanisms for the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, and its recording, including processing, at the level of the concerned departments, the judiciary and parajudiciary, health, education, social services.
- 1.14 Strengthen inter-ministerial coordination within the framework of an adequate response to the complex character of the problem of sexual exploitation of children.
- 1.15 Strengthen partnerships with the United Nations system, international institutions and organizations, NGOs (national and international), parliamentarians and the private sector.
- 1.16 Allocate human and financial resources to national programs for combating the sexual exploitation of children.

2. We recommend to the Governments, NGOs, associations and the private sectors of the countries of there the region the following:

- 2.1 Encourage and support the creation of national and regional networks for combating the sexual exploitation of children.
- 2.2 Promote the participation of children for the purpose of understanding the phenomenon and providing solutions.
- 2.3 Support studies of the sexual exploitation of children and disseminate them at the national and regional levels.
- 2.4 Organize information, education and communication campaigns against the sexual exploitation of children in cooperation with local officials, religious and opinion leaders, families and communities.
- 2.5 Introduce systematically the component “sexual exploitation” in the documents concerning the situational analysis of children and women.

3. We recommend to the international bodies in the countries of the region the following:

- 3.1 Support actions concerned with lobbying, dissemination information and sensitizing. The purpose is to get the countries to ratify and apply the international instruments, notably the CDE and its two additional protocols as well as its other pertinent instruments.

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- 3.2 Provide a technical assistance and support for the formulation of specific projects or national action plans for fighting against the sexual exploitation of children.
- 3.3 Set up and ensure the functioning of national committees for combating sexual exploitation.
- 3.4 Labor for setting up structures for the family and social rehabilitation/ reintegration of the victims, through providing free of charge qualitative social and psychological care for them.
- 3.5 Include the question of sexual exploitation of the children within the aid programs of the United Nations Aid for Development (UNAD).
- 3.6 Take into account and follow up the results of this Forum in line with the practice of following up the declarations of conferences held by Arab and African regional organizations.
- 3.7 Support and ensure the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning the sexual exploitation of the child emanating from the examination of the implementation reports of the CDE.
- 3.8 Establish appropriate systems for quantitative and qualitative data collection and follow-up mechanisms on the basis of precise indicators.

We, the members of the participating delegations from the MENA, WACA, ESA Regions respectfully request of the government of Morocco to present the results of this Forum to the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, in Yokohama, Japan 17 – 20 December, 2001.

***Rabat, Morocco
October 26, 2001***