



# 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

**Yokohama, Japan  
17–20 December 2001**

In August 1996, 122 governments met in Stockholm, Sweden, to discuss and commit themselves to act against the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was a ground-breaking event. Hosted by the Government of Sweden in cooperation with UNICEF, the campaigning organization ECPAT, and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this was the first time governmental, United Nations and civil society players had joined forces as equal partners to address this serious violation of children's rights to health, safety, protection and freedom from harm.

Now, five years later, the Government of Japan and its co-organizers – UNICEF, ECPAT and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child – invite governments, NGOs, inter-governmental players and private sector representatives, young people and others working to eliminate commercial sexual exploitation of children, to meet and see what progress has been made. In this working Congress, the focus will be on bringing information up to date, building on experiences since Stockholm, sharing lessons learned and moving forward with improved understanding, more and better ideas for action, new partnerships and even stronger commitment.

## From Stockholm to Yokohama

Much has been done since 1996: action has been taken to remove children from exploitation and aid their recovery and reintegration into society; campaigns have increased public awareness and targeted specific groups whose understanding is vital; projects have sought to protect children particularly vulnerable to exploitation; research has improved understanding of exploiters, mechanisms and obstacles to overcome.

An Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography has been adopted and opened for signature. ILO Convention 182 was adopted in June 1999; it provides that ILO members shall take immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including child prostitution and child pornography. A Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, has also been adopted and opened for signature. National laws have been reviewed and strengthened, and more than 21 countries can now apply extraterritorial legislation, which allows the prosecution of nationals who have committed offences against children in other countries. Thirty-four countries have developed National Plans of Action against commercial sexual exploitation of children and 26 more are developing plans. But we have hardly begun to scratch the surface of the problem.

## Demand and supply

Every year, millions of children are still sacrificed to gratify the sexual pleasure and profit-making motives of exploiters worldwide. It is impossible to say how many children are the victims of this criminal activity, for they are more often than not hidden – locked out of sight in seedy brothels, trucks plying trade along borders, sometimes far away from home in towns and countries to which they have been trafficked, or perhaps in middle-class suburban schools and shopping centres.

For no country is free of commercial sexual exploitation, no society immune and no child fully protected. Poverty, traditional practices, family dysfunction, drugs and conflict increase the vulnerability of children to exploitation of all forms, as does the very fact of being female. But the pressures of consumerism, misconceptions about sexuality and health, and above all increased demand and the profit motive mean that many children not normally considered vulnerable are also at risk. The isolating yet global world of new media sees children targeted by on-line stalkers and exploiters, while the child pornography trade reaches out ever faster and wider to those who exploit at a distance.

Demand is driven by both paedophiles and non-paedophile abusers. Supply is assured when poor families knowingly or unwittingly sell their children into sex, when 'granny' recruiters promise villagers an income through their children, by pimps and madames who see children as a commodity to be traded, by syndicates who traffick children like contraband goods. And much of this happens because of widespread complicity: taxi drivers who facilitate rendez-vous, hotel clerks who turn a blind eye, neighbours who forgive the man next door his little foibles. Wherever it happens, in whatever form and facilitated by whichever individual or group, one thing is certain: the commercial sexual exploitation of children is pervasive and it is never very far away.

## When will the Second World Congress be held?

17–20 December 2001

## Where will it take place?

The Conference Centre (in Pacifico Yokohama), Yokohama, Japan

## Who will participate?

Government delegations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations and other relevant intergovernmental bodies, private sector representatives, media.

Children and young people will also participate and, additionally, will meet from 13 to 16 December in Kawasaki, Japan, for a special youth event

## For further information:

Government inquiries and Congress logistics: Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Japan, Yokohama Congress secretariat: <http://mofa.go.jp.mofaj>

Inter-governmental agency queries: UNICEF: [gbalagopal@unicef.org](mailto:gbalagopal@unicef.org)

Private sector and NGO enquiries: ECPAT: [ecpatbkk@ksc15.th.com](mailto:ecpatbkk@ksc15.th.com)

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Background documentation and latest news from mid-June 2001:  
[www.focalpointngo.org](http://www.focalpointngo.org)