



UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

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### **Asian and Pacific Governments Approve Action Plan to Fight Child Sexual Exploitation**

Asian and Pacific governments have made combating child sexual exploitation a priority with the approval today of an action plan with specific deadlines to improve the rights and protection of children.

Delegates were attending the East Asia and Pacific Regional Consultation on the commercial sexual exploitation of children, organized by ESCAP, UNICEF, ECPAT, and the Government of Japan, in Bangkok from 16 to 18 October 2001. The meeting was attended by over 200 government leaders and representatives from UN agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector, as well as young people from around the region.

The meeting was called five years after the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1996. The 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress will be held in Yokohama, Japan, in December.

For the first time delegates from around the Asia Pacific region committed their governments to deadlines for putting in place legal and social frameworks for preventing child sexual exploitation and assisting survivors.

Ms Margie de Monchy, UNICEF's Regional Advisor on Child Protection for East Asia and the Pacific said that by setting specific timeframes for achieving goals, the governments of Asia and the Pacific had taken a big step in tackling this complex problem.

"By agreeing to time bound commitments for the first time, governments have moved one step further towards action on critical initiatives in this region," Ms de Monchy said.

Ms de Monchy also noted that the action plan recognized that Asia and the Pacific was a diverse region and that there was a need to address this issue in both the developed and developing countries.

"The action plan addresses a wide range of issues, reflecting the diversity in the region. It also recognizes that child sexual exploitation affects not only developing countries, but developed countries as well and that no country is untouched by this problem.

Ms Nanda Krairiksh, Chief of the Human Resources Development Section of ESCAP said that also of critical importance was the recognition by governments that, five years down the road from Stockholm, there was a need to monitor initiatives to ensure that they were effective in achieving their goals.

"Many countries of the Asia-Pacific region have been making progress combating the sexual exploitation of children. However, the record has been uneven and monitoring mechanisms to measure both progress and lack of action are necessary," Ms Krairiksh said.

"To move forward effectively, we need to take stock of the past," she added.

Regional governments will now prepare for the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress where they will share their experiences in battling child sexual exploitation with other governments from around the globe.