



UN, Governments and civil society review progress and set a course to accelerate the implementation of the *Rio Call for Action against sexual exploitation of children*

## Summary

On 25 and 26 October 2010, UN experts, State and civil society representatives including NGOs, youth representatives, law enforcement, private sector and academia participated in a meeting in Bangkok to review progress in the implementation of the *Rio Declaration and Call for Action*, two years on from the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children

## Highlights on Areas of Progress

Some areas where participants concurred on positive developments since 2008 included greater awareness of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and its recognition by the international community following the World Congress III; the enactment of new national legislation across countries, international instruments and new UN special procedures with mandates dedicated to protecting children from human rights violations; increased youth participation in various fora including in decision-making and intensification of peer-to-peer sensitization; the growing endorsement of responsibility by players such as Internet Service Providers, the tourism and travel industry and social and other media; and an increase in law enforcement collaboration across borders.

In particular, the **Government of Brazil**, which hosted World Congress III, has been active in implementing the Rio Declaration through a number of national efforts such as law reforms, program initiatives and increased private sector involvement, such as for example the IT and financial sectors. The sanctioning of a new law on child pornography by President Lula was referred to as a meaningful endorsement by the head of State.

**UNICEF** noted progress on many fronts after World Congress III, namely the existence of three UN Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for children,<sup>1</sup> two of which were appointed in 2009 and 2010, and inter-sector engagement to combat crimes against children on sexual exploitation of children in tourism and online. UNICEF also highlighted a number of national and regional initiatives and the launch of a two-year campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) by 2012, and the Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC).

**ECPAT International** focused on the time-bound targets identified in the Rio Call for Action, namely to establish 1) accessible systems of reporting; 2) coordination mechanisms across sectors and within them; and 3) establish independent children's rights institutions such as Ombudspersons. In this connection it highlighted progress that has been made to expand reporting and emergency help channels for children and their advocates in various areas of the world, for example in South Asia where Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan have agreed to use a harmonised helpline number for the region. ECPAT International also noted that nine countries in other parts of the world have established help lines for children since World Congress III. Other initiatives to note included new Internet-based hotlines including the *ClickCEOP* button and the 'panic button' on *Facebook*, both started in 2010. It was also noted that in six countries new positions for Ombudspersons for children have been established since 2008. Various initiatives to address specific forms of sexual exploitation of children, such as child trafficking, sexual exploitation in tourism and child abuse images were also outlined.

The **ECPAT network in Brazil**, one of the largest worldwide with representation from various states throughout the country, has elaborated a new set of Principles and Plan of Work, which is aligned to support the Rio Call. Included in its Plan of Work are initiatives to promote the Code of Conduct with the tourism industry; work with institutions working with children to establish guidelines of operation that address child rights to protection through institutional norms, protocols and policies; and mobilization for prevention of sexual exploitation of children in the Football World Cup of 2014.

The **ECPAT Youth Representative** highlighted the need for Governments, the UN, NGOs and the private sector to create channels for involvement of young people in discussions on issues affecting them. She underscored that promoting youth participation without providing the channels and means for meaningful participation was ineffective. Learning from various awareness-raising experiences were shared, particularly those that used peer-to-peer strategies and allowed youth to gain leadership skills. It was noted that such activities had reached youth worldwide and, since 2008, had involved 3,132 children in South Asia and 1,359 children in Ukraine in 2009-2010, in particular among vulnerable groups of children. Mobilization activities focused on child sex tourism are also being run through the youth partnership programme by Ukraine's youth advocates in anticipation of the UEFA Euro 2012 Football Cup.

The **UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (UNSRSG) on Violence against Children** emphasized that work must continue to translate the Rio commitments into realities for children. She highlighted her agenda as UNSRSG is to mobilize global action to prevent all forms of violence against children. She noted that she works very closely with other partners such as UN agencies, civil society organizations, young people, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Special Rapporteurs, Governments, and other partners like

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<sup>1</sup> Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (1997); Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children (2009); Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict (2010).

religious and community leaders. Her point of reference is the UN *Study on Violence against Children*, which has a clear link with the *Rio Declaration and Plan for Action*. She recalled that the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *ILO Convention 182*, and the *Palermo Protocol* all provide tools for ensuring the accountability of States.

Child Rights Expert and former Chair of the CRC **Jaap Doek** proposed that there is a need for NGOs, UNICEF and others to raise awareness on the new optional protocol to the CRC to establish a complaints mechanism for children. He stressed that adoption of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on Communication Procedures will provide a mechanism to file complaints against a State party for children's rights violations. He then discussed specific elements such as: The right to remedy for violation of human rights (translated into States obligations) in relation to the Convention; the dependence of children in most cases on their legal guardians to file complaints before courts at the national level; who can file a complaint; when complaints are admissible and inadmissible; how the Committee will examine complaints procedure and timeframes; the scope for child participation; and guarantee of confidentiality.

## Steps for Accelerating Progress

A. The plenary discussion identified some of the following actions:

1. Increase the quality of data on CSEC and bring greater involvement of the academic sector
2. Build greater synergy between initiatives to strengthen child protection systems and initiatives focused on prevention and protection against specific violations
3. Promote collaborations at regional level and follow up the Rio Call in work with specific countries

B. In a closed meeting, World Congress III partners identified the following course for follow-up and progress:

1. Integrate and monitor action on the provisions outlined in the Rio Call for Action within relevant child rights initiatives to ensure they are mutually reinforcing
2. Follow up with the Committee on the Rights of the Child to request that reference and examination of progress on actions of the Rio Call is integrated in reviews and recommendations
3. Support the campaign for universal ratification of the optional protocols to the CRC and follow up with States to acknowledge and support their ratification
4. Prepare a reporting template to share with States for reporting on progress of work against sexual exploitation. States would provide information by May of 2011 (every two years) as stipulated in the Rio Call
5. Integrate the information from Rio for the SRSG report in 2012
6. Support Anniversary review of ILO 182 and contribute with technical and other inputs
7. ECPAT will lead mid-term review processes in all regions throughout 2013
8. Support the review of the Millennium Goals and contribute to integrate child protection
9. 2016 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Congress and could be the date for a global review process.