

DECLARATION BY YOUTH AND ADOLESCENTS

Children and Young People's Participation at the Latin American Regional Preparatory Meeting

21 August 2008

Buenos Aires, Argentina

To Government representatives, NGOs, civil society organizations, private sector representatives and Latin American unions present in this preparatory meeting:

We, adolescents and young people from Latin America, considering the needs and concerns of all adolescents and young people in Latin America, regarding their poor participation in the processes against the commercial sexual exploitation of children, state that:

Considering the active, effective and change- and impact-generating participation of children, teenagers and youth as a fundamental right involving all of us and upholding the fundamental rights of children, adolescents and young people, particularly the right to protection against commercial sexual exploitation, we have agreed to state that the following items are key to developing effective and actual change.

We consider that it is necessary to create public policies regarding the participation of children, adolescents and young people. Public policies are any mechanism implemented by a State to solve a problem and to meet a legal and personal commitment. Thus:

- We urge States to create and implement public policies regarding commercial sexual exploitation that recognize the importance of the active and effective participation of children, adolescents and youth as a preventative and rights-restoring strategy.
- We think government officials should make a commitment to acknowledge the fact that children and youth are necessary for the development of better communities. This commitment should be real and should translate into specific actions and resource allocation for the implementation of initiatives to combat commercial sexual exploitation.
- Sexual and reproductive rights must be urgently included in education as a compulsory subject to be taught from primary/elementary school onwards, as a strategy to prevent sexual exploitation and other issues such as teenage pregnancies and STDs.

- Campaigns created by youth and mass information seminars containing prevention messages regarding commercial sexual exploitation should be promoted and publicized.
- Youth action projects contributing to the prevention of CSEC should be supported.
- The opinions of children, teenagers and young people regarding commercial sexual exploitation (sex tourism, abuse, pornography, trafficking) should be taken into account.
- Training for children, adolescents and young people and for different social actors involved in the prevention of CSEC should be supported and provided.
- Youth Councils at national, regional and international levels should be created. These should have a structure made up of adolescents and young people to facilitate peer-like contact with government officials in different environments.

We believe that mass communication is an effective strategy to educate and inform people. We also know that many sexual exploitation victims suffer because they do not have any information or because they get the wrong information.

Mass media are tools that can be used for good or bad purposes. Information can save lives; an informed person is a person who is forewarned. Moreover, a good campaign may deter the abuser.

Thus, we recommend that a Code of Conduct for the media (television, the press, virtual media) be drafted. We also recommend that youth should be addressed in a "peer-to-peer" way. Communication should be *from*, *with* and *for* the youth.

Finally, we, adolescents and young people, demand that everything in this Declaration should be fulfilled.