

East Asia and the Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting

for the World Congress III against
**Sexual Exploitation of
Children and Adolescents**

MEDIA RELEASE

20 August 2008

Region's governments urged to push through tough anti-child sex measures

Bangkok, Thailand – Despite some progress in recent years in addressing the problem of sexual abuse of children in East Asia and the Pacific, much more needs to be done to address the issue of child exploitation.

That was one of the key messages heard at the “East Asia Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents” – a two-day meeting held to feed recommendations to an upcoming world summit on the issue.

Hundreds of experts, government officials and young activists from around the region attended the meeting which was held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, and which ended on Tuesday with recommendations on how to end the scourge of sexual exploitation of children.

“Progress has been made but the fact is that East Asia and the Pacific continue to be hot spots where large numbers of children are exploited,” said Anupama Rao Singh, UNICEF’s Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific, at the meeting’s conclusion. “The region’s governments need to take their anti-exploitation efforts to another level and push through much tougher anti-child sex measures.”

“All countries are affected by these issues in various ways and there is no one approach that suits all,” said Amihan Abueva, Chairperson of ECPAT International, an NGO focused on ending child prostitution, pornography and trafficking. “For example, despite the focus being on tourists from abroad, we should highlight that the majority of the offenders are local men.”

Led by ECPAT International, the UN Children’s Fund and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the meeting’s attendees discussed – for the upcoming World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents* in Brazil – a set of time-bound goals and targets to mitigate the issues of child prostitution, trafficking, cyber crimes and abuse in travel and tourism.

The goals and targets include:

- Set up child sex offender registries in each country to ensure child abusers are monitored and prevented from travelling abroad to abuse young people in other nations as well as have extraterritorial laws in place to ensure nationals who abuse children abroad, if necessary, are returned to their home country to face prosecution.
- Do much more to protect children accessing the Internet. All countries must have specific laws to criminalize all forms of child pornography, including its production, dissemination and possession and ensure internet service providers introduce effective blocking and filtering services to prevent such images being hosted online.



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“While acts of commercial sexual exploitation are acts of violence as well as violations of human rights, they are not always treated as crimes,” said Shigeru Mochida, the Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP. “The need to criminalize such acts is stressed in all legal instruments and agendas for action on the commercial sexual exploitation of children.”

Apart from specific calls to target abusers of children, more holistic measures were urged. These were to:

- Ensure greater protection for children escaping poverty and who end up in abusive situations by providing job skills training and employment opportunities; and establishing specialist services to allow them to be repatriated and reintegrated by their communities so they are no longer vulnerable to exploitation.
- Educate those who come into contact with children who are vulnerable to abuse, and that boys are also victims and their needs should not be overlooked.

Among the delegates, young people played an active role throughout the meeting by sharing their views and making key recommendations related to the protection of their peers.

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Notes to editors:

* The World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents will be held in Rio de Janeiro from 25-28 November. More than 3,000 participants comprised of governments, civil society, international organisations, private sector, children and young people are expected to attend this global forum convened to map out the actions that have to be taken to combat the sexual exploitation of children. (www.ecpat.net/worldcongressIII)

