

CEDAW Secretariat

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18th February 2019

Re: General discussion to prepare the elaboration by the Committee of a General Recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. (22nd February 2019)

**ORAL STATEMENT from The National Alliance of Women’s Organisations[[1]](#endnote-1), The National Board of Catholic Women[[2]](#endnote-2) and women@thewell.[[3]](#endnote-3)**

In this oral statement, we wish to address two points from the concept note

1. The decision to curtail Article 6 of CEDAW in order to focus only on “trafficking in women and girls”.

2. The use of the term “forced prostitution” which is not UNGA agreed language.

The decision to exclude the “exploitation of the prostitution of women” from the scope of this General Recommendation as stated in the concept note,[[4]](#footnote-1) seems to us to automatically exclude from the scope of the discussion the main root cause of trafficking in women and girls. The profits generated through the exploitation of prostitution’s “market” by male demand for paid sex is the driver for most trafficking of women and girls. Article 6 in its full wording embraces addressing and tackling this root cause.

The ILO [[5]](#footnote-2) calculates that trafficking in human beings generates 150 billion USD profits to the traffickers, of which 66% (99 billion USD) is generated by the exploitation of prostitution of others.

If women and girls from all over the world are trafficked, it is primarily because States parties to the CEDAW convention have not implemented in a satisfactory manner their obligation to suppress the exploitation of prostitution of women. This is particularly true in countries of destination, if they fail to address the sexual exploitation of the prostitution of women, they become an attractive profitable destination market for traffickers.

Trafficking in women and girls will never decrease if States parties do not criminalise the exploitation of prostitution of women including pimping, procuring, running of a brothel and those who for pay for sex.

In relation to the use of the term “forced prostitution”. The only UNGA agreed language in this field is “prostitution”, or “sexual exploitation”, or “exploitation of the prostitution of others”.[[6]](#footnote-3) To emphasise this point we echo the words included in a written statement to the committee by survivors of sex trafficking and systems of prostitution worldwide:

“The erroneous terminology of “forced prostitution,” “enforced prostitution,” or “forced sexual exploitation” have no place within the United Nations’ system, resolutions, declarations or other documents. These are concepts that lead States parties and their citizens to believe that an opposite structure of “forced sexual exploitation” or “forced prostitution” exists. These terms have the stated goal of grievously separating so-called consensual exploitation of prostitution from that which is the system of prostitution itself and its inherent violence and discrimination against women and girls. States parties have gathered time and again to ratify or affirm that no human being can consent to her own exploitation or human rights abuse. The system of prostitution is not an exception to that established paradigm.”

**We therefore urge the CEDAW Committee,**

**1. to include the whole of Article 6 within the scope of its General Recommendation and therefore to add to the title of the General Recommendation the “exploitation of the prostitution of women”.**

**2. remove reference to “forced prostitution”**

Sincerely

 Lynda Dearlove, CEO, women@thewell



Zarin Hainsworth Fadaei, Chair, NAWO

 Maureen Meatcher, President, NBCW

1. The National Alliance of Women’s Organisations (NAWO, founded 1989) is an umbrella organisation for organisations and individuals based in the UK. It has consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC). All members are concerned to ensure women and girls gain access to their human rights, and to make equality between women and men a reality. Its diverse membership includes: single issue to specialist organisations, faith groups, health centres, arts-based organisations and others offering services and campaigning across a range of women’s concerns. We provide a platform for individuals and oraganisations to have a voice in, and implement national, European and international legal instruments relating to women and girls. NAWO has long been involved work to stop violence against women and girls including those who have been prostituted. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW) is a forum, founded in 1939, in which Catholic women of England and Wales come together to share their views and concerns at diocesan and national level. We are a consultative body to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC). We are organisational members of women@thewell, which is a front line service provider of exiting services based in London, UK. We are involved in the governance and staffing of the organisation and through this work with women whose lives are affected by prostitution, both on street and off street and including women who have been trafficked into prostitution. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. women@thewell is a front line service provider of exiting services based in London, UK. They work with women whose lives are affected by prostitution, both on street and off street and including women who have been trafficked into prostitution. They support upward of 250 women each year with 159 new clients presenting last year. All of the women they support are, have been or are at risk of being exploited in the sex trade. Most of the women using their services have multiple and complex needs including problematic drug and alcohol abuse, mental health difficulties, rough sleeping or insecure housing and trafficking. women@thewell is a member of both NAWO and NBCW. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/Trafficking/ConceptNote.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
5. <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_243201/lang--en/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
6. see the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, article 6 of CEDAW, and the Palermo protocol [↑](#footnote-ref-3)