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**Input for SR VAWG's Report on Violence Against Women and Prostitution**

**UN Human Rights Council 56th session June 2024**

*Desiree Alliance is a United States coalition of current and former sex workers working together with supporting networks for an improved understanding of sexual policies and its human, social and political impacts of criminalization’s surrounding sex work.  Our priorities are building local, regional, and national leadership to constructively advocate sex workers’ human, health, labor, and civil rights.  We commit ourselves to the tenets of human rights and base our foundations upon equity, equality, empowerment, and agency, to bring those voices into constructive and productive leadership roles in the sex worker rights movements and umbrella issues unique to sex workers.  We advocate for the full anti-criminalization of all consensual sex work.*

Although we have witnessed a global reaction to human trafficking atrocities, we can only speak of where our expertise lies within the United States. We speak for and represent sex workers and sex worker rights organizations in the United States.

**Introduction**

The greatest and most effective power we possess is the power of communication. Verbal and written language is the primary absolute of these skills. We find the language extremely problematic in the Special Rapporteur’s guidelines as an intentional manipulation that leaves no leeway or opportunities for sex worker rights organizations to shape and influence global policies on human, sex, and labor trafficking in all its forms. It is calculated, biased, subjective, and a dangerous narrative restricting sex worker rights to the margins of exclusivity. The deliberate disregard in these guidelines of our rights-based organizations undermines our work in the eradication of human trafficking.

We agree human trafficking in any form cannot be tolerated. The concentration of these restrictive guidelines leaves little to no room for solutions to the globalized effects of imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, armed conflicts, immigration/deportations, migrations, unviable obtainments to citizenship, collapsed economies, racism, etc., all inherently and categorically violent, allowing human trafficking to thrive. Instead, the Special Rapporteur proposes no clarifications or resolutions to these issues except fixated diatribes that dismiss any conditions of the existence of sexual commerce. Ill-thought punitive solutions to support a one-stop-shop ideology of trafficking in any manner, devalues the complexities of what drives human capital and detrimental to combatting the varied methods of illicit economic consumptions. This extreme and narrowed focus of more policing, additional stacked laws, hyper-criminalization, selective targeting (Nordic Model), create a false narrative that sex trafficking will be eradicated through these enforcements. In fact, these constructs generate the opposite effect. Impractical and ineffective laws designed to benefit women and children impacted by sex trafficking are met with policed enforcements and create mass barriers to resources. It is a deterrence that is completely ignored in these guidelines and a blatant injustice to those who are forced into sexual servitude. Creating tangible resources without fear of retribution by the very entities supposed to protect women and girls must be given full consideration before carceral solutions.

The enmeshment of sex trafficking and consensual sex work have blurred the lines not only with law and policies but anti-trafficking awareness rhetoric, making it difficult to discern those who are/have been sexually trafficked and those who choose sex work as a means of economic viability. That these guidelines paint a picture of all sex work as trafficking do not mitigate or alleviate circumstances of human trafficking, and only exacerbates the installation of fear and retributions of dangerous retaliations put upon by these guidelines presented. Targeted language produces a myriad of exclusions that define the fluidity of labor. Offering no distinctions between consensual sex work and sex trafficking exacerbates the divisions of clarity. Defining prostitution as inherently “bad” and omitting variations of how labor acts and moves across borders due to ever-changing dynamics of capital (for whatever reason), diminishes the complexities and intricacies that create clandestine markets.

The misappropriation of power of the Special Rapporteur to defer such guidelines as a resolution to human trafficking is ignoring the cause of the effects. It is appalling that the United Nations can piecemeal and cherrypick this horrific narrative of tempered-down adulterated language.

There are no perfect victims in trafficking. Trafficking is a complex series of systems that create clandestine markets in order for it to flourish. Delineating the landscape of the entirety of human trafficking to these guidelines is dangerous and reckless. You cannot create categorial boxes of who, what, where, and why; It creates bias and violence, and nothing gets solved. There is no impartiality in these guidelines and the predetermined antipathy is evident by purposefully omitting factors that distort the complexities and intricacies of the entirety of human trafficking. We question if the Special Rapporteur has the expertise to lead such complex narratives. It is apparent the ulterior motives to push ill-gotten presentations of unbalanced rhetoric is slanted towards this type of language that harms more than informs. It is an embarrassment for the United Nations, one of the most powerful global voices for human rights, to employ such prejudicial tactics of these limited guidelines for this report.

**Recommendations:**

* We ask the Special Rapporteur for written clarifications regarding the distinctions between consensual sex work and sex trafficking. We request the written clarifications have input of those who work in consensual sex and those who have experienced sex trafficking. We recommend the written clarifications act as a guideline for those who seek to gain a better understanding between these distinctions.
* We ask the Special Rapporteur to recognize anti-trafficking awareness campaigns as ultimately harmful to U.S. sex workers. Misinformation to inform the public of sex trafficking is misguided, uneducated, and mass marketed to create fear. Sex workers face the brunt of the rescue industry’s hyperbole through state sanctioned violence, hyper-criminalization, over-policing, targeting, and stigma.
* We request the Special Rapporteur to question the methods and motives of sex trafficking laws being enacted in the United States. Criminalizing consensual sex workers in the guise of anti-trafficking save and rescue mentalities is not conducive nor productive for those wishing to exit prostitution and regain economic viability within their communities. Collateral consequences of a prostitution conviction(s) can hinder one’s ability to maintain employment and procuring decent living accommodations. We must create ladders instead of barriers.
* Identify gaps between funding and resources in the United States. If we are to truly combat sex trafficking, we must be able to provide viable means for women to feel safe. Watered-down or non-existent resources cannot be considered adequate if we are to assist women and children exiting trauma-induced environments.

Sincerely,

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