
To the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS AND TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

From Monika – Multicultural Women’s Association, Finland
and National Council of Women of Finland

BASED ON THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS AND TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS AT THE HOUSE OF ESTATES IN HELSINKI, FINLAND ON 30 AUGUST, 2019.

The Monika - Multicultural Women’s Association, Finland and the National Council of Women of Finland underline that trafficking in human beings and exploitation in prostitution are severe forms of violence against women. We urge the importance to take all necessary efforts to decrease and prevent these human rights violations.

We strongly encourage the CEDAW to re-consider the chosen framework of the forthcoming General Recommendation on Trafficking of Women and Girls in the Context of Global Migration and protect women and girls from violence and exploitation as well as to abolish the use of the term “forced prostitution” and “sex work”.

We strongly claim, that the image of women and girls who make independent choices on prostitution is problematic. Female minors, women migrants, racialised women, and women in difficult life situations are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and violence. For many women in prostitution, violence is part of their everyday life, and violence is often one of the underlying reasons for women to become involved in prostitution.

An expanding sex-industry involves expanding violence and abuse of minors, undocumented persons and other people in vulnerable situations. In our view, it is both patronizing and racist to present the selling of sex as an acceptable route out of poverty.

There is strong evidence that trafficking, prostitution and exploitation of women and girls in vulnerable situations are linked to other forms of violence against women. The choice to be educated, to have a decent job, and a salary to feed one’s family should not have to be achieved through exploitation.



THE FINNISH NATIONAL RAPPOREUR ON TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS,

which is an independent monitoring authority with a task to report to the Parliament of Finland, was invited to address the CEDAW Committee in the Expert Group Meeting. The Rapporteur brought out the instrumental role of the CEDAW Convention and the Committee in protecting and promoting women's human rights. The Rapporteur emphasised that trafficking in human beings and exploitation in prostitution are forms of violence against women and that anti-human trafficking efforts are more effective when those factors in the society which perpetuate violence against women, including trafficking in human beings, are sought to be tackled. The Rapporteur underlined the role of demand reduction as an important preventive measure against trafficking in human beings. The Rapporteur has recommended Finland to seriously consider expanding the current partial ban on buying sex to make it comprehensive and to follow the example of Sweden, Norway and many other countries. Furthermore, the Rapporteur brought out in the meeting the obligation of the States Parties to implement the rights of all trafficked persons irrespective of their resident status, enshrined in the international law, as well as the prevalence of domestic human trafficking.

We therefore need politics and legislation which protect girls and women. It is our responsibility to protect those women and girls who are in the most vulnerable situations. Equality can be measured in how it embraces minorities and the most disadvantaged persons.

IN THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING THE FOLLOWING POINTS WERE UNDERLINED:

- Experts stressed that trafficking in human beings affects women and girls in particular. Eurostat figures show that 80 percent of registered victims of sexual exploitation in the European Union are predominantly female. Global numbers support the Eurostat figures. Globally, women and girls represent a clear majority of detected trafficking victims, comprising some 70 percent of the total number. The overwhelming majority of detected victims of sexual exploitation in the world are women or girls.
 - Under international law*, trafficking in human beings, especially of women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation, has been firmly defined as a form of gender-based violence/ violence against women. Experts emphasized that trafficking in human beings violates women's human rights and that states have a responsibility to assist and protect victims of human trafficking irrespective of their residence status. Under international law, victims of human trafficking have a special status and rights.
 - The experts encouraged the CEDAW Committee to re-consider the chosen framework of the forthcoming General Recommendation. The framework of international migration carries a risk of evoking control-oriented and anti-migrant responses to human trafficking. The experts encouraged the CEDAW Committee to be aware of the current political climate.
 - The experts were strongly of the opinion that prostitution is not an ordinary job, but a form of exploitation and violence against women, and that the role of policies and laws is to protect people in the most vulnerable positions and situations and prevent exploitation and violence.
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- Exploitation of the prostitution of others, including procuring (pandering) and the keeping, managing or financing of brothels, should be prohibited as a mean to prevent trafficking in human beings for the purpose of prostitution.
- The experts noted that the UN Trafficking Protocol obligates the States Parties to adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children that leads to trafficking. According to Europol, “in countries where prostitution is legal or regulated, it is possible that the sex industry is affected by the demand for cheap labour”, and in those countries “it is much easier for traffickers who wish to use legal environment in order to exploit their victims”.
- The criminalizing of buying of sex, that has taken place in Sweden, Norway, France and Ireland and partially in Finland, is a good example of a policy that prioritises gender equality and the integrity of all women. In Finland it has resulted in a decreased number of persons buying sex during the past 20 years.
- Sexually exploited trafficking victims have often been victims of various other forms of violence against women before becoming victims of human trafficking. These other forms of violence include domestic violence and sexual violence, forced marriages or FGM. Human trafficking is a part of the continuum of experienced violence in the life of trafficking victims. Trafficking in human beings should be addressed as a form of violence against women, and gender inequality should be seen as one of the most important underlying reasons for human trafficking.

The experts emphasized the instrumental role of the CEDAW Convention and the Committee in protecting women’s human rights. The experts stressed that the forthcoming General Recommendation is an important tool of interpretation for the states parties when they implement the provisions of the CEDAW Convention and especially its article 6, obligating States Parties to take all appropriate measures to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

MONIKA – MULTICULTURAL WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION

Bahar Mozaffari | Chair of the Board



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF FINLAND

Eva Biaudet | President, MP



SUPPORTED BY THE EXPERTS WHO PARTICIPATED THE MEETING

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Office of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman*

The Ombudsman for Equality, Finland

The Council for Gender Equality (TANE), Finland

*Per-Anders Sunesson, Ambassador at Large for Combating Trafficking
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*CEDAW General Recommendation No.19; Supplementary Protocol to the United Nations Palermo Convention (2000); the Council of Europe Convention on action against trafficking in human beings (2005)
