

Weaving the future for Asian women

Declaration on trafficking in women

Women from thirteen Asian countries met in Seoul, Korea from December 11 to 13, 1991 to share their experiences and work out strategies to curb the alarming increase in the traffic in Asian women. Shocking forms of traffic in women have come to light in the various regions of Asia causing serious concern and demanding collective action worldwide.

The Asian Women's Human Rights Council (AWHRC) was formed to address this issue and to bring about a new understanding of women's human rights. The Conference on the Traffic in Women has been organized to understand and analyze the sexual exploitation of Asian women in various forms and to explore the different ways of stopping this inhuman trade.

Moved by the massive problems on trafficking in women, they have come out with the following resolutions:

On the international level

☉ To utilize existing United Nations structures and conventions in seeking solutions to this problem. Although there is a Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons, to broaden the concept of trafficking and reflect the present

realities and forms of trafficking, the concept of traffic in women would not be a restriction of traffic for the purpose of enforced prostitution but should be enlarged to include the purposes of all kinds of activities to which women can be forced such as domestic labor, clandestine employment, false adoptions and bogus marriages.

☉ A Special Woman Rapporteur on Traffic in Women with monitoring and research obligations from either Asian, African or Latin American country should immediately be appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights.

☉ Asian non-government organizations should actively participate in proceedings of the various UN channels like the meeting of the Working Group of Contemporary Forms of Slavery, the CEDAW, etc.

☉ Women's Groups should likewise push for the use of the Voluntary Fund for participation of groups in Sub-Committee on Contemporary Forms of Slavery: provide financial assistance for victims of trafficking to start a new life as well as financial assistance for legal expenses in cases of trafficking.

☉ An International Tribunal to try Cases on Trafficking in Asian Women should be held.

☉ The AWHRC should apply for a UN NGO Consultative Status to carry out its tasks more effectively in the international level.

☉ The AWHRC should seek the assistance of other UN NGO with consultative status like WILPF and World Council of Churches, Commission on International Affairs, IWRAW and others, for lobbying purposes.

At the regional level

☉ Bilateral consultations on specific issues should be held among concerned groups and governments, e.g. on the entertainer issue (Japan and the Philippines, Japan and Thailand, etc.); on kidnapped and trafficked and refugee women (Pakistan-Afghanistan, Pakistan-Bangladesh, etc.); on problems of domestic helpers (Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei).

☉ Joint actions between sending and receiving countries should be organized to dramatize and highlight common issues and cam-

paigns. Exchange of information especially in monitoring cases of trafficking across countries, comparison of legal, immigration and labor procedures, especially the sharing of successful legal precedents on trafficking cases.

- More effective coordination between women regional organizations and formations on this issue (AWHRC, APWLD, etc.).

On the national level

- In trying to curb abuses arising from the massive migration of women workers, adequate mechanisms should be set up to ensure adequate protection for their welfare without prejudicing their right to seek work abroad.

- There is need for closer coordination and information sharing on the operations of recruiting agencies and underworld syndicates.

- Intensification of campaigns in media on the issue of trafficking. Radio, TV, print and other media should be utilized to the maximum.

- Extensive grassroots organizing of women for education and empowerment should be undertaken by existing women's organizations.

- Education on laws affecting women written in popular language needs to be done to inform the women of their rights.

- Asian governments should be pressured to sign existing human rights conventions affecting women migrants and workers.

- Work for revision of laws within each Asian country to respond to trafficking issue; the prostituted woman, and trafficked woman should be entitled to the protection of the same laws and enjoy the same human rights as every other citizen; her background and past sexual history should not be taken into account in court proceedings.

- Pressure governments to stop sex tourism to Asian countries as a means of earning foreign exchange.

- Intensify campaigns to end military prostitution.

- Pressure governments to disseminate widespread information on AIDS prevention and ensure that in doing so, prostituted women with AIDS are not marginalized and blamed for the spread of AIDS.

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