

For more information on Prostitution Issues at the World Conference on Women Beijing '95 see the Prostitutes Education Network at: <http://www.bayswan.org/UNpage.html>.

Trafficking Statement from the North American Delegates of the Network of Sex Work Projects

Recognizing that fraudulent and coercive trafficking and forced prostitution have historically been problems, threatening the health and well-being of women in developing countries, as well as women in post-industrialized countries, and

Whereas, women everywhere ought to have the freedom to determine conditions of their sexual relations whether it be for procreation, pleasure or financial reward, and therefore should also have the right to engage in sex work as long as it is consensual, and

Whereas, the current anti-trafficking laws are frequently applied against non-coercive agents for prostitution, and often result in deportation of women who suffer severe financial losses, are punished, and even executed in their countries of origin, and,

Whereas, not all so called 'trafficking' (a word which implies illicit and/or forced transport and labor) involves the non-consenting participation of the women who are 'trafficked' to another country for the purpose of engaging in sex work... or garment manufacturing.... or domestic work;

We, the North American Delegates of the accredited NGO - the Network of Sex Work Projects- wish to request the consideration and support of the attendees of the Fourth World Conference of Women, Beijing, China for the following:

- The Platform for Action currently makes no allowances for those of us who engage in sex work voluntarily, including those who currently have no other means of support, and who may wish to travel from one country to another in the course of our work
- Many of us have not found prostitution work, per se, to be violent. Even in situations which include violence and coercion, criminalization of trafficking and prostitution business operations encourages exploitation by organized crime, and encourages the police to use coercive tactics against us leading to violence [extortion, rape, and murder] against us at the hands of those who are supposed to "protect us."
- Additionally, where our work is prohibited, we have no recourse against violence against us by our clients or by the police, because we are outlaws in society's eyes, and therefore are not afforded the same legal rights as other workers.
- We support and encourage efforts to increase prosecution against those who use fraud or coercion in recruiting or hiring of women, whether it be for prostitution, work as a domestic, commercial garment manufacturing or any other type of employment. All workers must be protected from abusive situations, but it must be handled through laws against abuse rather than laws against prostitution or voluntary prostitution business operations.
- Laws against living off the earnings of prostitution, or trafficking, are often used against sex workers themselves . Even those who promote anti-trafficking laws recognize that such laws have been extremely ineffective in cases of forced prostitution. On the other hand, decriminalization and legitimization of sex

workers, and recognition of their rights is the only solution, in that it allows the development of support systems necessary to discover and dismantle conditions of abuse.

To address abuse and exploitation in the context of prostitution, we recommend:

1. Laws should not prohibit 'trafficking' without clearly distinguishing 'trafficking' from arranging voluntary travel for the purposes of engaging in prostitution, which should not be criminalized or prohibited by any law.
2. International laws should provide for asylum for sex workers, prohibiting deportation to country of origin, if they would be punished or harmed in any way by returning to their country of origin.
3. Local councils should be organized to include: ethnic, gender and economic groups involved, local persons currently engaged in sex work, as well as immigrants rights advocates, attorneys, health workers. This committee should:
4. International laws should guarantee sex workers all human rights, and civil rights afforded other citizens.
 - Advise on business regulations (such as size of business) and establish policy which affords maximum autonomy to workers, and insures civil and human rights for sex workers.
 - Establish and provide means of accessing services and support for persons to escape forced conditions, emphasizing peer based services, employment training and opportunities for those who seek alternative means of income.
5. Occupational safety standards, social benefits, medical insurance, etc., offered to other citizens, should not be denied on the basis of one's status as a sex worker.