The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism

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The Declaration and Agenda for Action, adopted by 122 governments represented in Stockholm for the first World Congress, clearly stresses the need for strong partnership building between governments, IGOs, NGOs, the private sector and the civil society. The understanding obviously is that joining forces will increase possibilities for efficient combating of CSEC. This project is largely an example of such partnership.

The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism project was elaborated by ECPAT Sweden in 1998 in collaboration with the World Tourism Organisation. It received some initial financial contribution from the industry, with whom agreements were signed regarding the adoption and implementation of the Code of Conduct. As from December 1999 the project enjoys financial support from the European Commission. During the past few years other European tourist sending countries have joined the project. The present partners are therefore Sweden, Germany, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In addition, tour operators in Denmark, Finland and Norway are now also implementing the Code.

The Code of Conduct, which primarily addresses the demand factor, has six criteria to be implemented by the tour operator companies:

1. Establish an ethical company policy regarding child sex tourism.
2. Train personnel in the country of origin and the travel destinations.
3. Introduce a clause in all contracts with hotels and other suppliers that proclaims a common repudiation of child sex abuse. The tour operator has the right to cancel the contract should the clause not be respected by the supplier
4. Provide information to travellers by means of catalogues, in-flight videos, ticket slips, web sites, etc.
5. Provide information to local key persons' at the destinations (i.e. restaurants, excursion companies, local police and others with whom the tour operators collaborate more informally).
6. Annual reporting on the implementation of the six criteria to the international Code of Conduct Secretariat, located in Madrid.

Referring to the sixth criteria, we feel that in order to achieve long-term sustainability and credibility of the Code and its implementation there needs to be an independent international monitoring system. The international Code Secretariat therefore elaborated a Reporting Form that was recently distributed to the concerned tour operators. The first completed forms were submitted to the Secretariat a few weeks ago. Judging from these reports but also from some on the spot evaluations carried out by ECPAT Sweden at some tourist destinations, we have found that the outcome was more positive than expected. The great majority of tourists welcome the Code initiative. The positive feedback received by the travellers, but also by the tour operators' own staff and suppliers, stimulates the tour operators to undertake continuous efforts.

The Code of Conduct is currently being implemented in some 20 countries in Asia, Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. Recommendation for the future are as follows:

- To involve the private sector in implementing the Code also in other major tourist sending countries such as the US, Canada, Japan, Australia, etc;
To secure long term funding for the Code Secretariat and the Steering Committee, preferably coming from the private sector and maybe to be calculated as a percentage of the companies' annual turnover. This would safeguard the sustainability of the monitoring mechanism and also increase the tour operators' sense of ownership of the Code;

To make sure that the implementation of the Code criteria become an integrated part of the daily routines of the tour operators rather than being perceived as an extra work load;

To target individual tour operator companies rather than national associations of tour operators, which so far has proven less successful;

To continue the involvement of ECPAT International;

• To further involve ECPAT groups (or other NGOs) as points of contact in the destination countries;

• To increase the awareness of CSEC and the Code among travellers with the expected outcome that they request intensified efforts by the tour operators.

A final conclusion of mine is that once the tour operators realize that being actively involved in the fight against CSEC actually benefits the image of their companies, they will have turned from being reluctant and sceptical to having a positive and committed approach. As one tour operator representative recently phrased it: 'Now that we are successfully addressing the CSEC topic it would not be possible for our company to stop doing it'.

**Ethical Policy against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children**

• We now would like to present ECPAT Sweden's proposal for an Ethical Policy against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be adopted by companies, organizations and also governmental authorities operating in foreign countries:

• We are aware that commercial sexual exploitation of children is a global problem and we take active part in combating it by undertaking the following measures:

• In all our activities and relations we strongly repudiate all forms of sexual exploitation of children. This implies when serving at home as well as abroad and also during temporary missions.

• We do not visit bars, restaurants or other premises where minors are sexually exposed (entrance fees, income from drinks etc may constitute payment to pimps and/or other adults involved in the child sex trade).

• We report obvious or suspected cases of child sexual exploitation to the local police.

• When marketing our products the advertising material shall not in any way allude to or in other ways depict children in a sexual manner.

• We raise awareness on the criminal activity of sexual abuse of children by undertaking preventive measures such as training of and information to our staff. We also collaborate with organisations and governmental authorities on issues regarding combating sexual exploitation of minors.

• According to our staff policy regarding the use of Internet, it is not permitted to seek child pornographic material on the Internet. It is furthermore not allowed to make contact or appointments with minors via chat, discussion groups or other forum with the purpose of sexual exploitation.

• Should child pornographic material be detected in the computer of an employee, the employer shall always report the incidence to the police and never erase the material. Possession of child pornography is a criminal offence and the material could be used as evidence of sexual abuse of children as well as to identify victims and offenders.

• We assume responsibility to abide by existing laws, rules and regulations in our respective host country as well as to respect the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.