

3rd World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents

25 – 28 November 2008, Rio de Janeiro

Under the general theme “Guarantee of the Rights of Children and Adolescents and their Protection against Sexual Exploitation – for a Systemic Approach” the 3rd World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents took place from 25 to 28 November 2008 in Rio de Janeiro. 170 countries, 160 governmental delegations and a public of 3,142 participants, including 282 adolescents of 96 countries, have participated in the Congress. The youths and adolescents had a space for interaction and exchange of ideas, named “Youth Space”.

UNICEF was one of the coordinators of the Congress, together with the Brazilian Government (the Special Secretariat for Human Rights at the Presidency of the Republic, in partnership with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and of Social Development and Fight against Hunger). In the coordination of the Congress also have participated the organisations ‘End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes’ (ECPAT), and the NGO Group for the Convention on The Rights of the Child (NGO Group).

A film festival took place in Rio de Janeiro from 25-28 November 2008 and worked together with the World Congress Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents III. Mostra Olhares (Visions Festival) included films and documentaries from all over the world on the subject. They were screened in theatres around the city with free sessions, debates and information concerning the eradication of the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

The different films included in the festival highlight a disturbing reality: the crime of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is everywhere, in rich or poor nations, in neighbourhoods and streets. The main message of the Visions Festival: “The world should be alert in order to stop it from happening in our homes, with our children”.

The official opening ceremony has been inaugurated by the President of the Republic of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. During his speech the President asked to stop hypocrisy. “Parents should be aware that giving sex education at home is as important as giving food and shelter”, stated he. The President also emphasized the importance of dealing with this issue in the curriculum of schools. “We have to stop the hypocrisy that prevents sexual exploitation from being properly dealt with and fought against.” He also highlighted the importance of listening to the adolescents present in World Congress III as the main specialists on the issue. The ceremony was attended by 282 boys and girls from

12 to 18 years of age, from 96 different countries, all of them engaged in the fights against sexual exploitation in their local communities.

The executive-director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Ann Veneman, underlined the necessity of curbing the vulnerability of children and adolescents from all over the world in relation to sexual exploitation, in all its possible forms.

Queen Silvia of Sweden recalled the history of the World Congress since its first edition in Stockholm, in 1996. According to her, the partnership of the Brazilian government, UNICEF, ECPAT and NGO Group, who shared the responsibility for the organization of the event, was a key move towards a successful mobilization on the theme, initiated with the event in Sweden.

The main themes of the Congress were:

- ▶ Private sector accountability in combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children
- ▶ Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Tourism
- ▶ Online child sexual abuse: The law enforcement Response
- ▶ Child Pornography and Sexual Exploitation of Children online
- ▶ Exploitation of children in prostitution
- ▶ Child Trafficking for Sexual Purposes

About 40 Brazilian and foreign journalists interviewed in a press conference the organizers of World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. The speakers reinforced the necessity of having media vehicles engaged in the campaign for the eradication of child pornography, child prostitution and the trafficking in children. It was also pointed out that the fight against sexual exploitation should be developed in the context of overcoming social inequalities and strengthening partnerships with the civil society: "The intervention of the State is fundamental, but the participation of NGOs, business executives, religious leaders and other social actors is essential to guarantee dignity to our children and adolescents".

The Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Plan of Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents

The Participants welcomed the progress achieved in addressing the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents since the 2nd World Congress in Yokohama, Japan, in 2001, especially the adoption of legislative measures by more States to strengthen the protection of children from sexual exploitation in compliance with international obligations, including the enactment of legal provisions for the protection of child victims of sexual exploitation during the process of criminal investigations and trials against alleged perpetrators, taking into account the United Nations Guidelines on justice in matters involving child victims and witnesses of crimes.

While acknowledging the progress, the Participants note particular challenges and concerns: There remain significant gaps in knowledge and understanding of how to address and respond to emerging manifestations, trends and the increasingly complex nature of the different forms of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents; In many States, laws do not adequately define and criminalize the various forms of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in accordance with applicable international standards, therefore hindering the effective protection of children as well as the prosecution of these crimes.

In the **Plan of Action** the Participants call on all States to:

- ▶ ratify without delay, and at the latest by 2013, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, ILO Convention 182 (1999) on the Worst forms of Child Labour, the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;
- ▶ ratify without delay, and at the latest by 2013, relevant regional conventions in particular the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children, the ASEAN Charter, the Inter-American Human Rights Conventions on International Traffic of Minors and on Violence against Women, the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, and the Council of Europe Conventions on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, on Cybercrime and on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, conventions which can be ratified by States non-members of the Council of Europe;
- ▶ define, prohibit and criminalize, in accordance with existing international standards, all acts of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in their jurisdiction, irrespective of any set age of consent or marriage;
- ▶ strengthen existing national child protection services or establish new ones in order to provide all child victims of sexual exploitation, without discrimination, with the necessary economic and psycho-social support for their full physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration; such services to be provided by well trained multi-disciplinary teams of professionals;

In the Plan of Action, the Participants call on States, where appropriate with the support of UN agencies, NGOs, the private sector, academia, children and young people and other relevant actors, to:

- ▶ adopt a clear definition of child pornography in accordance with international standards;
- ▶ criminalize the production, distribution, receipt and possession of child pornography;
- ▶ put online safety on the curriculum in schools, and promote it through youth organizations and at official meeting points for children;
- ▶ take the necessary legislative measures to require Internet service providers, mobile phone companies, search engines and other relevant actors to report

and remove child pornography websites and child sexual abuse images, and develop indicators to monitor results and enhance efforts;

- ▶ harmonize domestic laws according to international standards including the definition of the child, the prostitution of children, the age of consent, and the age of criminal responsibility;
- ▶ encourage and support the tourism, travel and hotel sectors in adopting professional Codes of Conduct, for example by joining and implementing the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children in Travel and Tourism;
- ▶ adopt a clear definition of child trafficking in accordance with obligations under the Palermo Protocol and other relevant international instruments and standards;
- ▶ establish policies and programmes that address not only cross-border but also internal trafficking of children;
- ▶ continue strengthening cross-border and internal cooperation of law enforcement officials;
- ▶ undertake and/or support, with the involvement of civil society and children, the regular evaluation of programmes and policies to prevent and stop the trafficking of children and of legislation that may have a conducive impact on trafficking, for example laws on marriage, adoption and migration, birth registration, accordance of citizenship, refugee or other status.

To download the Declaration please visit:

www.iiicongressomundial.net/congresso/arquivos/rod_the_midnight_version.doc