



35th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, 6-23 June 2017

Annual full-day discussion on the human rights of women

Panel 1: Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls

Oral statement

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Mr President, distinguished panellists,

APG23 agrees that there are “*gaps and challenges in engaging men and boys to prevent and end violence against women*” as stated in the concept note of this panel.

In regard to “*Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women*”, it is not possible to remain silent on the violence suffered by women forced into prostitution and slavery conditions.

It’s quite clear that women and girls who are selling their bodies, are often forced into prostitution because of social and cultural conditions related to poverty and, in most cases, they are exploited and enslaved by criminal organisations that exercise an absolute control on them. Criminal organisations consider these women as merchandise for the sex market and exploit them to gain the maximum profit.

As clearly stated in the 2016 UNODC report, 96% of detected victims of human trafficking in 71 countries are trafficked for sexual exploitation¹. Of all the detected female victims of human trafficking, 72% are trafficked for sexual exploitation².

According to our field experience, gained through the work of our street-units especially in Italy, women and girls involved in prostitution are always in a condition of slavery. Young girls are trafficked under the false and deceptive promise of a well paid work and then forced into prostitution through different and brutal forms of violence.

We think that sexual exploitation is an evident example of violence by men and boys against women and young girls, often under the age of 18. As our founder used to say: “*No woman is born as a prostitute, there is always somebody or something that induces her to sell her body.*”

It’s time to change the current paradigm that sees prostitution as a woman free choice of work and considers instead prostitution as induced by the demand of men and boys that are asking for sexual services. Prostitution is always a violation of the woman’s dignity.

In this regard, the clients become exploiters and accomplices of the sexual exploitation system.

In conclusion we would like to ask to the panellists: Why do not consider public campaigns to raise awareness on the dignity of women fallen into prostitution? What strategies do you suggest to tackle the problem and end this form of violence against women?

Thank You!

¹ UNODC 2016 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, page 27

² UNODC 2016 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, page 28