

## **GLOBAL STUDY FINDS SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM IS INCREASING AND OCCURRING IN EVERY PART OF THE WORLD**

**Washington DC/Cape Town/Bangkok: May 12, 2016.** A two-year Global Study initiated by ECPAT International published today reveals that more children are being sexually exploited than ever before and that this is an endemic phenomenon throughout the world. The report findings come despite a 20-year multi-sector effort to end the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism (SECTT).

The extent of SECTT has increased drastically and its nature has changed dramatically. White, western, wealthy, middle-aged men are no longer the typical offender. Offenders can be foreign or local, young or old; some are pedophiles, but most are not. Local, domestic, and intra-regional travelers account for most, with many being “situational” offenders, i.e. engaging in child exploitation because of an opportunity and because they feel they will get away with it.

Dr. Najat Maalla M’jid, Chair of the High-Level Task Force for the Global Study on the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism, said, *“We must all share the burden of ending sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. It is a moral obligation to act now to protect all children from this shocking crime wherever they are.”*

In the last 20 years international tourist arrivals have grown from 527 million to 1.135 billion annually, providing significant financial gain for most of those involved. Even the most remote parts of the planet are now visited. Yet, with this increase in global travel comes greater risk for children.

The Study reveals that:

- There is no typical offender, they are tourists, business travelers, migrant & transient workers, expats or civil society volunteers;
- Travelling child sex offenders are usually from the region or country where the offense takes place;
- The internet and mobile technology have fueled the increase in SECTT by creating new pathways for exploitation and reinforcing anonymity of offenders;
- Most child sex offenders did not plan the crime, they commit because there is an opportunity and they feel they can get away with it;
- No child is immune and victims are not only poor. Some are more vulnerable than others, such as the marginalized including minorities, street children, and LGBT;
- Services for victims remain inadequate;
- Enforcement and prosecution of offenders is hindered by a lack of coordination and information sharing between authorities; and
- There are alarmingly low conviction rates for the sexual exploitation of children, which means the majority of offenders evade justice.

In 1996 the first World Congress on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was convened in Stockholm, Sweden, principally focused on what was then called, “child sex tourism.” Since then, the way in which children are sexually exploited in travel and tourism has utterly transformed, but our understanding of this transformation has been limited and responses

often inadequate. Twenty years later, the new UN Agenda on Sustainable Development presents decision makers across the world and across sectors with a unique opportunity and incentive to accelerate progress and finally end the sexual exploitation of children in our generation.

The Study creates the largest databank on SECTT and recommendations built on this vast body of information include:

- Converting the UN World Tourism Organization's Code of Ethics into an international convention with worldwide ratification;
- Taking into account the issue of sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism in the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals;
- Creating reporting systems in every country so that children and others may report the incidences without fear of reprisal;
- Working with online service providers to remedy the growing sale of children for sex via the internet;
- Building an effective, proactive global system for law enforcement agencies to share information regarding offenders; and
- Expanding, and where required creating, care and support services for victims.

*"Today, we are celebrating a unique two-year collaboration involving 63 partners. We are also moving into the most important phase of the Global Study endeavour: the dissemination of recommendations that we hope will foster more effective responses."* Said Dorine van Der Keur, Director of the Global Study on SECTT.

Dorothy Rozga, Executive Director of ECPAT International, the Global Study project's host, emphasised: *"The Global Study gives children around the world a better fighting chance against offenders on the move"*.

In its nine regional reports the Global Study highlighted that Southeast Asia has long been viewed as a primary region for SECTT and remains a destination for offenders today. However, today the majority of offenders in this region are local men. In South Asia, home to half of the world's poor, SECTT affects boys through street-based exploitation, and girls in brothels and other sex venues. Domestic and regional travelers are the primary offenders.

In East Asia SECTT is dominated by local men traveling within the region, with domestic travelers outnumbering foreign ones. In the Pacific Island states children are at high risk in the mining, logging and fishing industries. In Australia and New Zealand children from indigenous communities are at a higher risk. In the Middle East and North Africa a key concern is the status of women and girls who are particularly vulnerable to child or "temporary" marriage. In Sub-Saharan Africa children are at highest risk in remote areas.

In Latin America the incidence of SECTT is very high, particularly in tourist areas near poor and excluded communities. Tourist arrivals in Latin America have quadrupled since 1980, with three-fourths of the travelers coming from the United States and Canada.

The United States and Canada are source countries for offenders, who travel to other regions in order to sexually exploit children. However, child sex trafficking in business travel, major

events, conferences, oil fields, transport hubs, etc. have made the United States and Canada destination countries. Europe is also viewed as a source for offenders with SECTT increasing, primarily in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Global Study reveals the extent of SECTT, outlining its global nature, what motivates it, the evolving trends and concrete recommendations for action, including a call for better ongoing data collection and more research into the issue.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **The Global Study was funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands through ECPAT-Defence for Children in the Netherlands.**

The overall organisational funding support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Oak Foundation to ECPAT International, made it possible to initiate and coordinate the Global Study.

The Global Study involved 70+ contributors from the public and private sectors. It was guided by a High-Level Taskforce, with members drawn from a wide range of expertise and backgrounds, including governmental, non-governmental and the private sector. The Taskforce provided oversight for the Global Study and advice on recommendations to support evidence-based action to combat SECTT. Members of the taskforce also advocate, each within their own sector, for widespread endorsement of the Global Study recommendations. Members of the Taskforce are:

- **Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid**, Chair, Former Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
- **Ernie Allen**, Former President and CEO of the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC), USA
- **Marilyn Carlson Nelson**, Former Chair and Chief Executive Officer of Carlson, a global travel and hospitality company, headquartered in Minneapolis, USA
- **Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen**, National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children, The Netherlands
- **Milena Grillo**, Executive Director of Fundación Paniamor, Costa Rica (ECPAT Representative)
- **Dr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur**, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)
- **Dr. Taleb Rifai**, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) based in Madrid
- **Jean-Cyril Spinetta**, Former Chief Executive Officer of Air France-KLM SA.

For more information and access to the full study, visit the Global Study website:

[www.globalstudysectt.org](http://www.globalstudysectt.org)

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