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INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND THE GENDER
PERSPECTIVE

Written statement* submitted by Human Rights Advocates Inc., a non-governmental
organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated
in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 January 2003]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The Problem of Demand for Trafficked Women and Children and the Role of Military and UN Peacekeeping Troops in the Exploitation of Women and Children

1. This statement addresses the issue of trafficking in persons and in particular, the issue of demand, the problem with exploitation of women and children by United Nations (UN) peacekeeping troops, and the need for education at local levels. Every country in the world is affected by this problem, as virtually every country is either a country of origin, transit or destination for these victims. The importance of this issue is highlighted in Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in October 2000. It calls for full prosecution of crimes against women, increased protection of women and girls during war, more women appointed to peacekeeping missions and involved in the decision making process at all levels. Furthermore, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, emphasizes the critical nature of this growing problem. Trafficking in persons is the third largest source of profits for organized crime, behind only drugs and guns, generating billions of dollars annually.¹

The Problem of Demand:

2. Though trafficking is driven by both supply and demand, historically there has been excessive emphasis on the issue of supply. Reducing demand is crucial to any strategy to reduce trafficking in persons. In destination countries, demand for trafficked persons has increased over the past several decades. This demand has maintained a lucrative business for those who profit from the exploitation of trafficked victims. Trafficking does not require large capital investment, it involves little risk of discovery by law enforcement (and sometimes corrupt local officials are actually complicit in trafficking or turn a blind eye), and unlike drugs, trafficked victims can be resold and used repeatedly by traffickers.² The issue of demand was recognized by this Commission in its 2002 resolution, but more concrete action is needed.

3. Though poverty and gender inequality make it easier for traffickers to procure young women and children, the buying power of the consumer is the driving force behind the success of the industry. As long as demand remains strong, vulnerable populations will continue to be exploited.³

4. Trafficked women generally do not voluntarily enter prostitution. They are most often tricked into the sex industry and coerced into staying. Traffickers move victims from their home communities to other areas—either within their country in some remote area, or to foreign countries—where the victim is isolated and sometimes unable to speak the language. Victims are acquired in various ways. Sometimes they are kidnapped outright and taken forcibly to another country. Other times they are lured with job offers

1 Miko, Francis, T. and Grace Park, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*, U.S. Department of State: Congressional Research Service Report 98-649 C, p.3, May 2000.

2 U.S. Department of State-Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, p. 2, June 5, 2002.

3 Family Health International, *Preventing Trafficking in Women and Children in Asia: Issues and Options*, vol. 1, No. 2, p. 4, September 1999.

and false promises of good paying jobs.⁴ Traffickers advertise in local newspapers offering “good jobs” at high pay in exciting cities. They use fraudulent employment travel and model agencies to lure unsuspecting women into their networks.⁵

5. Fear among customers of infection with HIV or AIDS leads traffickers to recruit younger girls, some as young as seven, erroneously perceived by customers to be too young to be infected.⁶ This past year, between 700,000 and four million women and children worldwide were bought, sold, and held against their will in slave-like conditions.⁷ Victims are often subjected to cruel abuse to keep them in servitude, including beating, rape, starvation, forced drug use, confinement, and seclusion. Once victims are brought into destination countries, their passports are confiscated.⁸ Many suffer mental breakdowns and are exposed to diseases. They may be denied medical care, and once sick, are sometimes killed.

The Role of the Military

6. Long-held definitions of masculinity reinforced by the military structure contribute to the continued subordination and exploitation of women. HRA identified the military’s role in perpetuating the problem of trafficking. (See E/CN.4/2002/NGO/43). Recent exposure of actions by UN peacekeeping troops provides an example of the scope of this problem. By the end of June 2002, the UN had 46,460 peacekeepers from 87 countries.⁹ A 1996 study reported that in some war-torn countries, children become victims of prostitution following the arrival of peacekeeping forces.¹⁰

7. During a UN mission to Cambodia from 1992-1993, the number of prostitutes proliferated from 6,000 to 25,000.¹¹ Child prostitution grew as infection rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases among Cambodian prostitutes increased demand for “clean young girls.”¹² Some say the UN mission itself was responsible for the rapid spread and possibly even the introduction of HIV in Cambodia.¹³ The civilian population in Cambodia tried to complain about UN personnel misconduct and abuses, but was in effect told, that “boys will be boys.”¹⁴

8. A 2002 report from UNICEF and Save the Children accused UN troops of exploiting children at refugee camps in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. The very

4 Miko, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*, p. 4.

5 U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, p. 1, 2002.

6 Miko, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*, p. 5.

7 U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, p. 1, 2002.

8 Miko, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*, p. 5.

9 Deen, Thalif, Inter Press Service, *UN Cracks Down on Sexual Exploitation by Peacekeepers*, p. 1, July 31, 2002.

10 *Id.* at 1.

11 Mackay, Angela, Peace News, *Sex and the Peacekeeping Soldier: the New UN Resolution*, Issue 2443, p. 2, June/August 2001.

12 *Id.* at 2.

13 *Id.*

14 *Id.* at 3.

humanitarian aid intended to benefit the population was used as a tool for exploitation.¹⁵ Many girls, some younger than 12, were coerced into having sex with non-governmental organization (NGO) workers and UN soldiers in exchange for food, money, shelter, or medicine.¹⁶ They said they'd come to expect this was required of them in order to receive the assistance.¹⁷ Many had several children by the age of 18 and others were infected with AIDS. There was little supervision at these camps and the young victims had little chance of complaining about what was happening to them.¹⁸

9. In recent genocidal conflicts between ethno-national groups in Bosnia and Kosova, civilian populations were deliberately targeted in strategies of "ethnic-cleansing" and systemic rape.¹⁹ Further abuse by UN peacekeeping troops should therefore be unthinkable, yet UN troops reportedly solicited prostitutes in war-torn regions.²⁰

10. Individual countries' troops also contribute to demand. (See HRA's report in 2002 at E/CN.4/2002/NGO/43). For example, U.S. military policy considers sexualized recreation "vital" to maintain troop morale.²¹ A Korean congressional report estimates that of the women in the sex industry, the majority are prostitutes around U.S. military bases.²² These women are promised good jobs or lured by prospects of marrying American GIs.²³ During the stay of military forces in the Philippines, around 17,000 women were prostituted in Olongapo City alone, which is the site of the largest U.S. military base outside the U.S.²⁴

The Need for Education:

11. In many countries trafficking is on the rise. Lack of economic opportunities exacerbates this problem. Impoverished families are often prey to trafficking procurement agencies.²⁵ It is not only poor families who fall prey, but also parents who desire modern comforts in exchange for the price of their child,²⁶ which can range from four hundred to eight hundred US dollars.²⁷ Traffickers mislead parents into believing their children will be taught a useful skill, but instead they are enslaved in the sex trade

15 Redfern, Paul, *The EastAfrican, UN Troops Named in Africa Refugee Sex Scandal*, p. 1, March 4, 2002.

16 *Id.* at 1.

17 *Id.*

18 *Id.*

19 Crossette, *When Peacekeepers Turn Into Troublemakers*, p. 2.

20 *Id.* at 2.

21 Enriquez, Jean, *Filipinas in Prostitution Around U.S. Military Bases in Korea: A Recruiting Nightmare*, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific, p. 3, November 1999.

22 *Id.* at 3.

23 *Id.*

24 *Id.*

25 Healey, Margaret A., *Prosecuting Child Sex Tourists at Home: Do Laws in Sweden, Australia and the United States Safeguard the Rights of Children as Mandated by International Law?*, 18 *Fordham Int'l. L. J.* 1852, 1864 (1995).

26 18 *Fordham Int'l. L. J.* at 1864.

27 Vandenberg, Martina, *Markets and Women's International Human Rights*, 25 *Brooklyn J. Int'l. L.* 141, 149, (1999).

network.²⁸ Parents think they are being paid for the child, but the trafficker's payment creates a debt bondage that the entrapped child victim must pay off. Moreover, once women become prostitutes, they will always be known as prostitutes and their status will leave them shunned from the very families that disposed of them in the first place. This vicious cycle perpetuates itself as many victims return to the only trade they know.

12. Women often feel an overriding sense of duty to their families. Hence, they rarely object to migrating to another place for work. The family views this as a beneficial exchange, when in reality the debt bondage system leads to their child never gaining freedom.

13. Thailand's Daughters' Education Program (DEP) was established to involve key community leaders in educating families at risk for selling a child.²⁹ Clearly, trafficking children has serious mental and physical impacts on their development and growth as individuals. Just as the policy for change is well-articulated, so too must there be effective action at local levels, to create sustaining patterns of change within these vulnerable communities.

Recommendations:

14. We urge governments to ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

15. We further urge governments to research, report on, and take measures to reduce the demand for commercial sex.

16. We urge that governments should consider, before entering into armed conflicts, the ramifications of war on the most vulnerable groups within civilian populations, which have traditionally been women and children.

17. As to the problem with military personnel and UN peacekeeping troops, clear codes of conduct and a reinforced chain of command committed to enforcing a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation is crucial. The UN itself needs an effective mechanism to ensure full prosecution of criminal conduct by troops, if individual nations fail or are unwilling to punish their soldiers. Training troops on the intrinsic value of their missions and the importance of respect for and protection of the populations they purport to assist, is critical.

18. We urge that the Commission ask the Security Council and the General Assembly to investigate allegations of human rights violations by UN peacekeeping troops.

²⁸ Id. at 1.

²⁹ http://www.thailife.de/wecare/depdc/depdc_visit.html

19. We encourage governments to provide economic and educational opportunities for young girls, to ensure their protection from this horrible network. Changing gender perceptions of women's role in society is also crucial in the battle against trafficking in persons. Educating parents of the detrimental effects of selling their children is fundamental to this process.
