

His Excellency Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations
Via email: sgcentral@un.org

16 April 2020

Dear Secretary-General Guterres,

RE: UN response to COVID -19 must include sex trafficked, prostituted and sexually exploited persons who are made even more vulnerable by the pandemic

On behalf of the undersigned, sex trade survivors, frontline service providers, and women's and human rights activists, each dedicated to ending the sex trafficking and prostitution of women and girls in our respective countries and worldwide, we have the honor to transmit this letter to you.

We applaud your efforts to highlight the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on women and girls, and appreciate your call to address the global surge in domestic violence linked to the lockdowns. We are writing today to call on you to ensure that sex trafficked, prostituted and sexually exploited persons are also included in the UN's response to COVID -19.

COVID -19 is laying bare the world's socio-economic structural inequalities, the failure of austerity measures, and clearly demonstrates how crises exacerbate the vulnerabilities of disadvantaged people. ***Prostituted persons, including victims of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, the majority of whom are women and girls, are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.*** The United Nations must not leave them behind.

The ***lives of prostituted persons are often rooted in structural inequalities***, sex- and gender-based violence, discrimination, poverty, displacement, racism, xenophobia and systemic failures - which the pandemic has exposed and amplified. The COVID -19 outbreak is leaving prostituted persons exponentially vulnerable to new forms of abuse and is increasing poverty, as they lack safety nets. Every day, we receive reports that women in prostitution are burdened by their desperate need to survive, when no food, safe shelter, or medical assistance are available to them or to their children. They are in further danger of being re-trafficked and sexually exploited with all of the associated physical, psychological, and life-threatening harms, including increased risk of catching COVID -19. ***Their access to support structures and exit services is increasingly limited, if existent at all.***

We are also documenting reports of ***increased online exploitation of women and children***, including through a surge in the use of pornographic websites and other online exploitation vehicles. As men move online looking for non-contact opportunities for sexual gratification, they are joining sexual predators and profiteers who were already using the internet to exploit and abuse women and children at an unprecedented global scale. Amid the COVID -19 pandemic,

the anonymity and ever-increasing connectivity afforded by the internet, which in the current environment is not being monitored by humans, means increasing numbers of women and children, especially adolescent girls, are vulnerable to grooming, online sexual exploitation and sextortion leading to sex trafficking.

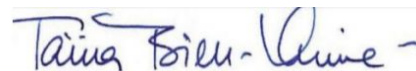
Our collective obligation to ensure that sex trafficked, prostituted and sexually exploited people, consisting overwhelmingly of women and children, are adequately protected and supported is both critical and urgent. We are calling on your office to ***establish a global fund for people exploited in the sex trade*** to enable them to access comprehensive services. Whilst the Fund would respond to immediate and short-term needs of these individuals, it would also focus on providing exit support for those who seek to leave systems of sexual exploitation. This Fund must be accessible to all women who are incarcerated and detained for prostitution-related charges. Finally, this Fund should support efforts, organizations or networks that, in line with international law and human rights principles, seek to address the structural inequalities that push women into prostitution rather than entrench a system where women and girls are exploited. The goal of the Fund should be to assist and uplift human beings who are bought and sold in the global multi-billion dollar sex trade; not further enable their profiteers or exploiters who deem sexual exploitation as a form of labour. In addition, we are calling on you to ***make addressing online sexual exploitation a priority*** as part of efforts to address the impact of the pandemic.

We thank you for your leadership in promoting the rights of women and girls, and remain available to discuss the issues we have raised in this letter at yhassan@equalitynow.org and tbienaime@catwinternational.org.

Respectfully,



Yasmeen Hassan
Global Executive Director
Equality Now



Taina Bien-Aime
Executive Director
Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

cc.

Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti
Chef de Cabinet to UN Secretary General
marialuiza.viotti@un.org

Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka,
Executive Director, UN Women
phumzile.mlambo-ngcuka@unwomen.org

Ms. Åsa Regnér,
Deputy Executive Director, UN Women
asa.regner@unwomen.org

Survivors:

Aleida Carreño Buelvas
Aleida Ortiz Gonzales
Ally-Marie Diamond
Elisa Valera Soba
Elizabeth Soba Diaz
Fiji Phoenix
Gabriela Lozano
Gloria Zuleima Carreño Buelvas
Grizelda Grootboom
Huschke Mau
Jeanette Westbrook

Nidia Ramiez
Nomonde Mhhlali Meiji
Pilar Carreño
Simone Watson
SPACE International-USA
Summer Carter
Survivor Exit
Survivors for Solutions
Yanet Peña Peña
Yuli Duarte Peña

Organizations:

1000 Möjligheter/1000 Opportunities
Action Against Violence and Exploitation
AkiDwA
Amicale du Nid
Anti-Violence Network of Georgia
Apne Aap Women Worldwide
Arcidonna napoli
Asociación Feminista Tiemar
Associació de Dones Antígona
Association La Source
Association MARTA Centre
Association Mémoire Traumatique et
Victimologie
Association Women for the Contemporary
Society
Autonomous Women's Center Belgrade
Baby Milk Action
Breaking Free
Bridge North Women's Mentorship &
Advocacy Service
Bright Fame
Build a girl
Businesswomen Organisation of Lithuanian
Ethnic Groups
CAP International
Center for Sustainable Communities
Development
Central Arizona National Lawyers Guild

Centre of Gender Culture
Charitable organization "Community
Foundation of Kherson "Zakhyst"
Citrus Health Network
Civic Alliance Political action of women
Clara-magazine
Coordination française du Lobby Européen
des femmes
Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
Coalition Against Trafficking in Women -
Asia Pacific (CATW-AP)
Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
Latin America and Caribbean (LAC)
Colombian's femicides Foundation
Compass31.org
Consejo Nacional De Mujeres De Colombia
Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation
sexuelle (CLES)
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the
Good Shepherd (Global)
Conseil National des Femmes du
Luxembourg
Corporación Mujer Denuncia y Muévete
Courage for Freedom
ECPAT-USA
Eden's Farm
Ehuleak-Comisión investigación malos
tratos a mujeres de Navarra

Embrace Dignity
End the War on Women Collective
Engendered Collective
Equality Now
European Network of Migrant Women
(ENoMW)
European Women's Lobby
EVA Center
Exodus Cry
Femmes pour le Dire, Femmes pour Agir
Femmes solidaires
FiLiA
Fondation Scelles
Forum femmes méditerranée
Fredrika Bremer-förbundet
Freedom Challenge
GenerationAbolition
GENFAMI
Hermanas Oblatas del Santísimo Redentor
Hungarian Women's Lobby (Magyar Női
Érdekérvényesítő Szövetség)
Lanfuissue NGO
Iniciativa Pro Equidad
initiative feministe euromed IFE-EFI
Institute for Feminism & Human Rights
International Alliance of Women
International Centre on Sexual Exploitation
Isala Asbl
Journey Out
K&k confidential
Kafa (enough) Violence & Exploitation
Kansai network about Japanese army
KFUKs Sociale Arbjede, Denmark
Klaipeda Social and Psychological Support
Centre
la CLEF
La Voix des Femmes
Le Monde selon les femmes
LibresarienneS
Life Bloom
Ligue du Droit International des Femmes
London Abused Women's Centre (Canada)
M.A.L.I. Alternative Movement of
Individual Liberties
Maisha E.V.-African Women in Germany

Montreal Council of Women
Mujeres Supervivientes de violencias de
género
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of
the Good Shepherd
National Alliance of Women's Organisations
(NAWO) UK
National Board of Catholic Women
National Center on Sexual Exploitation
National Women's Council of Ireland
NGO "Center "Women's perspectives"
NIA
Nordic Model Now!
OBJECT
Observatoire féministe des violences faites
aux femmes (Belgique)
One Billion Rising
People Serving Girls At Risk
Persons Against Non-State Torture
Petra mujeres valientes
Plataforma Navarra de mujeres por la
abolición de la prostitución
PornFreeCO
Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights
Prostitution Research & Education
Rad fem Sweden Survivors
Realstars
Regards de Femmes
Resistenza Femminista
Réussir l'égalité Femmes-Hommes
Rights4Girls
Romanian Women's Lobby
Ruhama
S.H.A.D.E Movement
Samaritana Transformation Ministries, Inc.
Scelles Foundation
Scientists for a world without prostitution
SISTERS - for the Exit from Prostitution!
E.V. (registered association)
Soroptimist International of Suburban
Chicago
Swedish Women's Lobby
Talita Asia
Tamasha Talkies Inc.
The InMaat Foundation

Traductoras para la Abolición de la
Prostitución
Unizon
Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's
Shelter
Violence Against Women in War Research
Action Center
Volyn Press Club
Wahine Toa Rising
Widows Rights International
women@thewell
Women Health Philippines
Women's Aid
Women's Equal Justice Project
Women's Support Project
World Without Exploitation