



SANTAC

Southern Africa Network against Trafficking and Abuse of Children

PRESS STATEMENT in connection with the case of trafficking and exploitation of minors in Southern Africa

The Southern Africa Network against trafficking and abuse of children – SANTAC - , is by this means expressing their outrage at the lack of respect and protection of children, a phenomenon that is increasingly manifesting in recent times, especially in the form of physical violence, psychological, sexual and labor exploitation, both within and outside their countries, with a repulsive impunity. Since the launch of the campaign against the abuse of children in the region, in 2002, thousands of cases of abuse, traffic and exploitation were already denounced by Civil Society, media and other non-state actors through the reports of the victims themselves, studies, and various types of events, but without any response. One of the most recent events that brought together representatives of the governments, Civil Society and international institutions, was SANTAC Regional Conference held in March of 2007 in Johannesburg, to define intervention and prevention strategies against trafficking and abuse of children in the region, and which adopted a declaration that will serve as the base for a political dialogue on this issue between regional governments and their partners.

In the week in which SANTAC commemorated one year after the event above mentioned, and when the World was completing 201 years after the abolition of slavery, two children and young Mozambicans had been released from a captive in a luxurious home in the political capital of South Africa, where they were exploited by means of forced prostitution. The complainant of this case, a Mozambican lawyer resident in South Africa, revealed also to have refused an offer valued at two million Rands made by traffickers, with the aim of buying his silence. According to him, during the process of investigation of this case, it was discovered that it was an international syndicate and that one of the children had a passport ready for their transfer to France. He also revealed that the police know and have information, including images, on the networks of traffickers and their ramifications inside and outside South Africa.

The Vice Attorney General of the Republic of Mozambique and the National Director of the Criminal Investigation Police, traveled to South Africa in connection with the case. The complainant of this case, a Mozambican lawyer resident in South Africa, revealed also to have refused an offer valued at two million Rands made by traffickers, with the aim of buying his silence. According to him, during the process of investigation of this case, it was discovered that it was an international syndicate and that one of the children had a passport ready for their transfer to France. He also revealed that the police know and have information, including images, on the networks of traffickers and their ramifications inside and outside South Africa.

Given the evidence of trafficking, abuse and sexual exploitation of children, aggravated by torture and forced consumption of drugs, and, while acknowledging and praising the merit of, for the first time, having a clear cooperation between the Mozambican police and the South African police on a case related to cross-border traffic between the two countries, SANTAC takes the following position:

1. It is our view that both the Mozambican and South African governments and parliaments should immediately adopt specific laws against human trafficking including the adoption of mechanisms for collaboration and extradition for proper and effective legal treatment of cases such as the latest incident;
2. As a country of destination, South Africa should immediately comply with its responsibilities of protecting the victims, guarantying a safe shelter, medical and psychological assistance and create conditions so that the victims can continue with their studies in South Africa until they recover from the traumas and deported voluntarily and if for it the necessary conditions have been organized in their places of origin; the victims should also be compensated, as recommends the United Nations Protocol for the prevention, suppression and punishment in situations of human trafficking, ratified either by Mozambique, as in South Africa.
3. That the trafficker who was caught red-handed and her partners are tried and punished severely and that other networks already identified by the two parties are denounced publicly and dismantled;
4. That in the countries of destination, and in this particular case, South Africa, governments a Civil Society should be launched campaigns for identification, rescue and recovery of victims, from the places where they are explored, as well as for the identification of potential sites of exploitation of children; that the industry of demand, labor or sexual, and all of those that sexually abuse minors are exemplary punished.

5. Regarding Prevention: Presupposing that there may be an increase of cases of human trafficking, especially of women and children due to FIFA world cup to be hosted by South Africa in 2010, we call for all countries of the SADC region to immediately adopt a law and create conditions for its effective implementation before 2010; that in each country of SADC region the specific legislation against human trafficking, especially in women and children is accompanied by the adoption of policies and programs at National and Regional levels to protect and reduce the vulnerability of children from trafficking and exploitation.
6. That the SADC Secretariat should immediately realize the Ministerial Conference on trafficking and abuse of minors, which is being prepared since 2007;
7. It is our view that SADC countries should consider the need for urgent adoption of common socio-economic policies and joint programmes to avoid that children of the most disadvantageous countries in the region being the main victims of sexual and labor exploitation during the regional integration scheduled for 2015;
8. SADC should seriously think on the situation of vulnerability of children to trafficking and exploitation before moving forward with the issue of regional integration.[Aqui]
9. Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation: It is our view that SADC countries should immediately establish bilateral and multilateral agreements for the protection of victims, penalty of traffickers and reduction of vulnerability in countries both of origin and of destination.

Adopted in Subscribed by members of SANTAC meeting in Maputo during its second session of the General Assembly.

SANTAC Secretariat

28 March 2008