

Conference
Preventing sexual abuse of children
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**The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children
from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism**

**Mr Theo Noten, program manager of End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography &
Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) – The Netherlands**

Summary

Private companies and ECPAT cooperate in the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism

One of the most sensitive issues in travel and tourism is the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Sexual exploitation of children happens everywhere in the world. But most of the victims come from the most vulnerable groups of societies in developing countries and are multiple disadvantaged by origin, social status, poverty, education and gender. Offenders often come as travellers from richer countries in Europe, America, Asia and the Pacific. The travel and tourism industry are making efforts towards preventing and reducing the commercial sexual exploitation of children by implementing the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Commercial Exploitation in Travel and Tourism.

Partnership between the tourism sector and civil society works

The Code was developed by ECPAT Sweden after the First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm in 1996. In the last decade The Code has built strong momentum by successfully creating awareness, recruiting new signatories and winning multiple international awards and it is internationally recognized as good practice for private-sector partnerships focusing on children's rights for the tourism industry to combat child sex tourism. The Code is an industry-driven, multi-stakeholder initiative, in which tourism industry partners from the hospitality sector and tour operators and travel agents work together with NGOs mainly from the ECPAT International network. The joint mission is to create awareness, provide tools and support to the tourism industry in order to combat the sexual exploitation of children related to travel and tourism. ECPAT members who are experts on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children and children's rights in the countries involved are often the Local Code Representatives (LCR) that recruit potential industry members, support their implementation of the Code and help tourism companies integrate child protection into their daily operations. Much of the Code's success is dependent of the efforts of LCRs based in tourist receiving and sending countries around the world.

Challenges

The Code is at a turning point. Signatory tourism companies have highlighted concerns over a need for more support and follow-up for implementation of the Code criteria. There is a need for support in the preparation of policies, in the training staff members,

of supplier contracts, of tourist awareness materials, and the complications posed by high staff turnover. While much can be made of industry 'ownership' of the problem, it is notable that the performance seems generally proportional to the resources available to the LCR.

Recommendations

- Tourist receiving and sending countries should have adequate legislation and law enforcement
- States should require tourism companies to address child protection
- Tourist receiving and sending countries should require tourism companies operating in their territory to include child protection in their business principles
- Tourist receiving and sending countries should promote tourism companies to participate in the Tourism Child Protection Code
- Civil society in tourist receiving and sending countries should be enabled to work with the tourism sector to stop sexual exploitation of children in tourism and report cases.

Useful links:

www.ecpat.nl

<http://www.ecpat-france.fr/>

www.thecode.org