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Statement submitted by Crowley Children’s Fund, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

The present statement has been prepared by Cynthia Teixeira, Co-founder and Managing Director of the Crowley Children's Fund. This statement concerns the prevalence of child sex trafficking in the world and how two organizations in the community are working to eliminate such violence against women and girls: specifically, California Against Slavery and Run for Courage in the Sacramento region of California.

A report in 2010 indicated that there were 12.3 million human slaves around the world (2010 Trafficking in persons report, United States Department of State). Another report (Global report on trafficking in persons, February 2009) indicates that the most common form of human trafficking is sex exploitation, making up about 79 per cent of those who are trafficked, and states that worldwide approximately 20 per cent of those trafficked are children.

Three of the 10 worst child sex trafficking areas in the United States are in California: San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego. Sacramento is among the top five cities in the United States for child sex trafficking. At times Sacramento has ranked as high as second as a child prostitution hotspot, ranking, therefore, with cities such as Las Vegas, Chicago, New York and Oakland, California. Nevertheless, the maximum sentence for human trafficking is five to eight years (the greater number if a minor was trafficked) in California.

California state laws are not effectively holding traffickers accountable. The Crowley Children's Fund has been supporting California Against Slavery, which seeks to strengthen California's state human trafficking laws. Human trafficking is a criminal business driven by profits. By increasing the risks associated with human trafficking and decreasing the "profits", this horrendous practice of modern day slavery can end. Additional information about California Against Slavery's work and mission can be found at the following website <http://californiaagainstsavery.org/>.

In 2012, a major initiative of California Against Slavery has been the Californians Against Sexual Exploitation (CASE) Act, which aims to strengthen laws against sex trafficking and improve Megan's Law relative to online predators. The Act (Proposition 35) will be on the ballot in California on 6 November, 2012. Three brief stories provide insight as to why this is a problem that must be eradicated:

(a) Minh's parents could not wait for her to grow up and earn them money. They realized that they could capitalize on the child's body. Starting when she was 11 years old, her father took her to Vietnamese cafes and massage parlours between San Francisco and San Jose to sell her;

(b) A 31-year-old pimp approached 10-year-old T. M. on the street in Oakland, promising to provide for her like a daddy and love her like a boyfriend. All she had to do was earn him money. The transition was not hard for the young girl since her mom had been trading her for cocaine since she was four years old;

(c) Carissa was 12 years old when she was abandoned by her family and picked up by a pimp who sold her to truckers in Fresno. Her "escape" from this exploitation was to be thrown into juvenile hall two years later. Yet her pimp did not spend a day in prison for profiting from her sexual exploitation.

A call to action is a must — legally, politically, socially and individually! As is paramount to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, most recently reauthorized in 2008, prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership must be addressed.

The mission of California Against Slavery is to defend the freedom of every child, woman and man by empowering the people of California to fulfil their obligation to stop human trafficking. Their goal is to make human trafficking the riskiest criminal business in California. To that end they believe:

- (a) Every person has an inherent dignity, which our society and laws must uphold and protect;
- (b) Human trafficking is a crime against human dignity and a deprivation of basic human and civil rights;
- (c) Allowing any form of slavery to exist severely impacts our society and communities. It is a problem that concerns us all.

All too often those who have been exploited and trafficked are treated and charged as criminals. This does not provide an environment for healing, solace and restoration for individuals who, although they have committed what is legally defined as a crime, are victims.

If passed, the Californians Against Sexual Exploitation Act will not only help to further curb sex trafficking in the State of California but will also act as a trailblazer for other states in the United States. A link to information is provided here <http://www.caseact.org/case/>.

The next challenge will be to enforce and implement this legislative act and related laws aimed at prosecuting violators and perpetrators of human trafficking (for sex or labour). Additionally, as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated in June 2011, “We have to develop new mechanisms for shielding potential victims and bringing more perpetrators to justice”. Therefore, the Crowley Children’s Fund joins with Californians Against Sexual Exploitation as well as with its non-governmental organization partners locally, regionally, nationally and internationally to do everything they can to end modern-day slavery.

Additionally, it is important to recognize that the physical and psychological wounds incurred by those who have been sex trafficked will remain with those individuals for a lifetime. Even when a way is taken to escape this exploitative and oppressive life, the resources to support their recovery and healing are sparse. Nevertheless, with individual resilience, many are able to move beyond their status as victim to that of survivor. Still, this pain is further engendered when the perpetrators of such crimes end up facing little if any time in jail or fines for their egregious actions. The Run for Courage, founded in 2010, exists to raise awareness and funds to combat sex trafficking. Specifically, they route a large proportion of the funds raised to organizations that work with restoring victims of sex trafficking, regionally, nationally and internationally. Current news and information about this organization’s efforts can be found at <http://runforcourage.com/>.

In addition to a major event coordinated each year to raise funds, Run for Courage is very involved in raising the awareness of the prevalence of sex trafficking and the impact on victims by visiting organizations, high school assemblies and college classrooms for presentations, and so on, to ensure that the

community becomes more and more aware of these heinous crimes. Their stance is that as awareness grows, so will the convictions of perpetrators.

This issue needs to remain a top priority of the Economic and Social Council as it continues to develop policy recommendations and identify solutions to this very important and rampant social problem that threatens human rights throughout our globe.
