Combating child sex tourism

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OBJECTIVE : This communication seeks to put forward a set of proposals for action as a reference framework for the prevention of child sex tourism. The actions proposed seek to: - deter and punish child sex abusers, - take action in relation to the demand and supply of sex tourism involving children, - encourage the Member States to take a common stance against this affliction. SUBSTANCE : The Commission considers that Community action in this field is justified on more than one count: . because of the transnational nature of the phenomenon and its effects, . because of the risk that measures by Member States will be spread too thinly if no effort is made to increase coordination. The Commission proposes four main types of action in a medium and long term perspective: - Deterring and punishing child sex abusers: the Commission's action will focus on stimulating and promoting an effective deterrent: . by making a regular evaluation of progress in the implementation of the legal reforms and legal practices concerned by the Member States, . by the collection and exchange of information other than that of a legal nature in order to improve knowledge of the problem and to combat its hidden nature (information on the links between tourism and child prostitution, the identity, motivation and behaviour of the abusers, on tourist guides and prospectuses and the implications of sex tourism for public health), . by encouraging the national tourist authorities to take preventive measures in this field, particularly as regards information to travellers. - Stemming the flow of sex tourists from the Member States: to this end the Commission intends to: . coordinate information and awareness-raising campaigns implemented in the Member States in order to increase their impact and mobilize the various Community information networks on this subject, . make available to the tourist industry, in particular through training programmes and schemes, guiding principles on combating child sex tourism (training modules on the objectives and mechanisms for combating child sex tourism), . draw up and reinforce codes of conduct and self-regulatory mechanisms in the tourist industry (the definition with the tourist industry of a basic minimum of commitment on a voluntary basis to prohibit any explicit or implicit encouragement of sex tourism). - Helping to combat sex tourism in third countries: action to combat abuse of children must be placed in the wider context of observance of democratic principles and human rights. To this end the Commission wishes to: . rationalize methods for action and coordinate the Community resources available for the protection of children who are victims of sex tourism (e.g. provide measures under the EDF for the rehabilitation of child victims, etc.), . make the respect of democratic principles and human rights an essential element in the contractual relations between the Community and third countries (the main concern is to make certain over-complacent countries understand that the promotion of tourism should not be linked with the promotion of sex tourism). - Encouraging the EU Member States to take a united stand against child sex tourism: given that the 'consumers' of sex tourism are Community citizens, that child prostitution involves Europeans and that certain Member States have signed the Convention on the rights of the child, the Member States of the Union are directly implicated in this phenomenon. The Commission therefore strongly encourages the Member States to take action and to move forward in taking action against this scourge. It calls particularly on the Council and the Member States to define their positions in order to dispel any doubt as to their willingness to combat this affliction.