

International Summit on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism

Ágora Bogotá Convention Centre
Bogotá DC, Colombia

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10.15 – 11.30 a.m.

Opening Session

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,
Buenos días
Good Morning.

I am delighted to be participating in the **International Summit on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism here in Bogota**. As an international community, we have seen good progress being made on child rights including preventing the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. Countries have variously ratified or acceded to the relevant international instruments, and have taken legislative measures to protect children and uphold the rights of child victims and witnesses going through the criminal justice process.

BUT...let me take you back to September 2015, when the international community gathered at the United Nations headquarters in New York to decide upon a new, broad development framework to replace the Millennium Development Goals. The General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which included 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) built on the principle of *'leaving no one behind'*. In the context of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), the international community called for the end of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children as one of its targets. This target should be measured, among other indicators, by assessing the number of victims, disaggregated by age, sex and forms of exploitation. One of the visions is therefore to have *'a world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation'*.

HOWEVER, the fact that we are holding this international summit appears to suggest that there is still a lot more work to be done to address the gaps and inconsistencies that still exist in the implementation of the relevant international standards and the protection of children in general. Tackling child sexual exploitation is no simple task and so finding solutions to this appalling crime requires concerted effort from a multitude of actors across the globe. This summit means we should renew our strategic alliances to create a safer environment for children and ensure offenders are apprehended. Action in one country is insufficient as offenders would easily migrate to other jurisdictions. For too long, a piecemeal approach has been the norm, and while national governments and the international community can count some major successes in the past few years, without a comprehensive response to the problem, exploitation will continue.

From an **organisational perspective**, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) supports countries in ensuring that children are better served and protected by justice systems. UNODC works to ensure that the protection of children is integrated in broader rule of law reform and that children have access to fair, transparent and child-sensitive justice systems through which their rights can be enforced and protected.

On a **project wide basis**, the Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT) is a four-year joint initiative by the European Union and UNODC being implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the project reaches thirteen countries across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. GLO.ACT addresses trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants focussing its work amongst others on legislative assistance, regional and transregional cooperation and assistance and support to children among victims of trafficking.

Colombia is one of the beneficiary countries of GLO.ACT and maintains a regular and open dialogue between national authorities, NGOs, the private sector and UN agencies. As an example of the work currently being undertaken in Colombia, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute is working with GLO.ACT to finalize Specialized Guidelines to protect child victims of trafficking. This work could also be seen to be an entry point to providing a stronger response to children exploited in the context of travel and tourism.

In **Brazil**, a recent parliamentary inquiry commission found that the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents on the island of Marajó is the worst in the

country, especially the exploitation of indigenous children and children coming from riverside communities. GLO.ACT trained local professionals belonging to the Child and Adolescent Protection Network on the Island of Marajó on the identification, prevention, assistance and support to child and adolescent victims of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.

A renewed determination to safeguarding and protecting children is not beyond our ability: it is simply the minimum required to combat the shocking actions of offenders who sexually exploit children in the travel and tourism industry. In GLO.ACT, we have coined the phrase **“Hear their voices. Act to Protect.”** It is a simple but a profound message with substance – that we must listen to the voices of victims but also we must empower children as actors of change so that we can improve and strengthen our response and importantly, meet our obligations to child victims.

If I may, I would like to thank the Government of Colombia for the high level commitment and engagement with this global initiative and its willingness to host this unique event led by the Colombian Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism in cooperation with the Tourism Authority of the Capital District of Bogota (IDT), the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Colombian Child Protection Authority (ICBF) and ECPAT Colombia. I would also like to acknowledge the co-organizers of the Summit: the High-Level Task Force on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism, UNICEF, the World Travel and Tourism Council, the United Nations World Tourism Organization and ECPAT International.

The next two days is an opportunity to design and commit to concrete actions and help promote a community of practice – **a multi stakeholder approach towards ending sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.** We all want a commitment to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation in the travel and tourism industry but this commitment must also translate into action!

So I end my remarks by saying – **‘Hear their Voices. Act to Protect’.** Listen to the voices of victims and empower children to be actors of change.

Muchas gracias.

Thank you.