



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Regional Centre for
East Asia and the Pacific

**“Eliminating Violence Against Women through Crime Prevention
and Effective Criminal Justice”**

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Sawadee-Khrub friends,

- Honourable Khun Kittipong Kittayarak, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice
- Mr. Eduardo Vetere, distinguished expert on criminal justice – I daresay across the planet
- My colleagues from the UN
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to join the other speakers this morning in welcoming you all to this special week-long event – particularly those of you who have travelled many miles to get here.

I start my remarks this morning by commending the Thai Ministry of Justice for taking the initiative to co-host this meeting of the Inter-governmental Group of Experts whose purpose will be to review and update the draft Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice".

This meeting is mandated by the ECOSOC. During the 17th session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in April 2008, Thailand took the lead to propose that it be

held here in Bangkok. And so we are gathered together today to do our work.

But let me say that this is not the only important initiative which Thailand's Ministry of Justice is organizing in support of goal of equitable treatment for women and girls.

Last week, ALSO here in Bangkok, Thailand's MoFA and MoJ co-organized a briefing session to seek support from diplomatic corps and representatives of international organizations on an initiative to develop "Draft United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Sanction Measures for Women Offenders". This initiative is again part of a project which also falls under the patronage of Her Royal Highest Princess Baj-rakiti-yabha.

In this connection, Thailand has prepared a resolution for the "Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders" for the upcoming 18th CCPCJ next month. If adopted, this resolution will allow us to table "Draft UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners..." for adoption at the 12th Crime Congress in Brazil next year.

This is important work.

That initiative – together with the one being launched today – are excellent examples of a Member State taking the lead to affirm the central message of this year's theme on International Women's Day – which passed just two weeks ago: "Women and Men – United to End Violence Against Women".

For let there be no doubt, the global economic crisis we are facing will have a disproportionate impact upon women.

1. Shrinking global demand for the clothes, textiles and electronics produced in our region will mean that women are the first to lose their jobs. As a result, there will be more women among the newly-unemployed.
2. Women will be forced to bear more of the burden as they try to keep families together in the face of rising food prices
3. Women will feel the sharp end of reduced access to micro-credit

4. Women will be the first to feel the reduction of social services as governments cut back on spending programmes.

All of this will have consequences at home. Often, these consequences will be violent.

I sometimes hear people say that our past century has seen a remarkable degree of progress in the ability of ordinary women to stand up against injustice and triumph against all the odds. And much of this is true.

However, history also tells us that progress is not a given. It is not inevitable. Sometimes we seem to take two steps backward for every one step forward. The ravages of the past century also bear witness to this truth.

We must therefore remain firm to our purpose and steady on our goal.

The UN's role in all of this is twofold. First we help to establish conventions and norms which themselves set the tone and quality of laws and norms adopted by our member states. The Commission's decision to convene this Inter-Governmental Group of Experts to review and update the Model Strategies bears out this important role.

But we do more than this. In addition to setting the norms for fair and equitable treatment – of all persons – under the law, our work calls upon us to act. This means – secondly – working alongside our member states to ensure that women's lives are made more secure. That women and girls lead healthier and – hopefully – happier lives.

During recent years, the United Nations has paid increasing attention to not only strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice systems, but also giving greater attention to the needs of women and girls and how victims and witnesses are treated within the justice systems. We pursue this goal on many fronts. This morning I shall give but one example.

If you look at UNODC's Regional Programme Framework for the next four years here in East Asia and the Pacific, you will note how central is our work on countering human trafficking.

According to our recently-released Global Report on Human Trafficking, sexual exploitation is the most commonly-identified form of human trafficking in our region. (We know that the certain reporting impediments result in an under-estimation of the problem of bonded labour.) But – on the whole – the extent of sexual slavery in our region is enormous. As is the level of violence associated with this slavery.

There are countries in our region where most human trafficking is perpetrated almost exclusively for sexual purposes. These are places where it is girls – not women – girls – who mostly fall prey to the predators that constitute “uncivil society”. Places where the most horrendous types of violence and brutality are visited upon such girls during the process of being trafficked.

Our role is – yes – to strengthening laws and frontline law enforcers to stop this crime. But our work – on the ground – is also to help build four things:

1. First. Strong and well-informed PROSECUTORIAL and JUDICIAL systems to throw the book at convicted traffickers
2. Second. Quick and accurate IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS along with immediate protection and support
3. Third. Special support to allow VICTIMS to serve as witnesses.
4. Fourth. Systems and processes that enable effective INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATIVE AND JUDICIAL COOPERATION in trafficking cases

This is only part of what we do. I could – but will not – relate the various model laws – and guidelines – and protocols – and toolkits which are being developed to assist law enforcement officers, like many of you in the room here today.

We must mount our struggle from all sides. And each of us may play our part.

Our meeting this week will – this time – be an expert-driven exercise. It will hammer out the new revised version of the Model Strategies. I am grateful to my colleagues from Vienna – who have travelled so far to be with us today. They have brought with them a draft which will serve as the basis for our deliberations.

But others have contributed to this process. And here I would like to pay tribute to the work of Khun Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee who has provided the most effective stewardship to this process not only when he was working at the Thai mission in Vienna but now that he has returned to us here in Bangkok, serving in the Ministry of Justice. He is joined here today by his team. I would also like to thank my own team who have supported this process, led by Khun Sao.

Once we have a final product, we will report this to the 19th session of the CCPCJ in April 2010.

As I understand it, Thailand will then present a draft resolution to transmit the updated Model Strategies to the GA for their official endorsement later that year.

All of this means progress. And so, slowly – slowly, in this field of endeavour – that is to say, the field of crime prevention and criminal justice – we will continue to chip away at barriers which exclude women and girls from the effective protection of the law and allow them to achieve full participation in society.

For reducing – and ultimately eliminating – violence against our sisters and mothers is no less important than achieving success in other areas of female empowerment – such as ending early marriage, ending female genital mutilation and ending sexual harassment.

I salute this Expert Working Group and wish it every success.

Thank you.