

Remarks: Mr. Gary Lewis, UNODC Regional Representative

**Project Childhood Thailand Consultation Workshop
A Legal Framework for Combating Child Sex Tourism
8.30am, 27 February 2012, Room 4, UN Conference Centre Bangkok**

Swaadee Khrub and Good Morning to all.

Khun Kittipong Kittiyarak, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice for the Royal Thai Government, all distinguished partners, our subject this morning is a crime which reflects the dark side of globalization: **child sex tourism**.

- Child sex tourism is a global challenge, which requires a coordinated domestic and international response. Travelling child sex offenders pose a significant law enforcement challenge. Predators travelling away from their usual home can prey on vulnerable children. Often, they are not detected. Often, they are not brought to justice.
- This impunity must be stopped.
- The task of identifying travelling child sex offenders can be difficult. In the Greater Mekong Subregion, offenders can travel within and across borders with ease.
- Often they use tourism services. Often they maintain anonymity in the community. Often they exploit loopholes in legislative and law enforcement measures. And far too often, they escape detection.
- These features of child sex tourism mean that legislative and law enforcement responses must be comprehensive and coordinated—both domestically and in collaboration with regional partners.
- Because there is a real risk that, while legal gaps remain, travelling child sex offenders will continue to escape justice.
- UNODC is therefore pleased to be working with international and government partners to support the harmonization of legal frameworks and the harmonization law enforcement responses to target travelling child sex offenders in the region.
- One of the countermeasure which has been developed in the region is called Project Childhood. UNODC is proud to be the primary implementing agency of the Protection Pillar of Project Childhood. This initiative is funded by the Government of Australia (specifically AusAID) and supports the development of strong law and justice frameworks to bring travelling child sex offenders to justice in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

- Working with government and NGO partner agencies in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, our joint project brings together two components.
 - The first, led by UNODC, focuses on technical assistance activities to bolster legislative frameworks and law enforcement efforts against child sex tourism.
 - The second, led by INTERPOL, supports specialized law enforcement activities, pooling international and regional experience to directly target travelling child sex offenders in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.
- We are also pleased to be working in partnership with World Vision, the implementing agency responsible for Project Childhood's Prevention Pillar, which is working to strengthen the protective environment for children in travel and tourism.

The importance of having strong law and justice frameworks

- We know that strong legal frameworks are essential to underpin law enforcement efforts, and provide justice agencies with the tools they need to successfully prosecute serious offences.
- Thailand is already a regional leader in its law and justice approach to targeting child sex offenders.
- Thailand also has a strong legal framework to protect children from sexual abuse and the worst forms of exploitation. Thailand's *Anti-Human Trafficking Act* is an excellent example of this.
- A draft *Law on the Prevention and Suppression of Material Inciting Dangerous Behaviour*—including child sex abuse material—is also currently under consideration, and I commend this important government initiative.
- So we cannot afford to be complacent.
- In this direction we have recently completed similar consultations in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam. These consultations demonstrated the firm regional commitment to combating child sex tourism, and we look forward to continuing our engagement with each partner country as the project progresses.

Outcomes and way forward

- Today's consultation provides an excellent opportunity to share information on current legal and law enforcement approaches to child sex tourism in Thailand. I encourage all participants to share our expertise and our ideas.

- For our part, in UNODC, we look forward to sharing the results of our initial analysis of Thailand's domestic legal framework, and we welcome contributions from Thailand's legal experts here today.
- We also look forward to further discussion on concrete steps to take this project forward.
- I am confident that, through our discussions today, we will pave the way forward to work together to combat child sex tourism in Thailand, and in the region.
- Thank you.