



Statement to the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons – 13 May 2013

Inter-Active Panel on relevant legal instruments and effective partnerships to protect and assist victims of human trafficking

Good afternoon. My name is Lauren Hersh. I am a former prosecutor of sex trafficking crimes here in New York City and the current New York Director of Equality Now, a global human rights organization.

Equality Now and our grass roots partners lobbied hard for a comprehensive definition of trafficking in the United Nations' Trafficking Protocol, which was based on the experiences of survivors and victims.

While we applaud the significant efforts by UN Agencies to prevent HIV/AIDS, two recent UN reports - The Global Commission on HIV and the LAW Report and *Sex Work and the Law in Asia and the Pacific* - undermine the spirit and intent of the Trafficking Protocol.

The Global Commission report calls on countries to reform international law, particularly the Trafficking Protocol and tells governments to: “**repeal** laws that prohibit consenting adults to **buy** or sell sex and laws on brothel-keeping.”

The Asia and the Pacific report goes one step further, calling for the repeal of laws criminalizing **pimping and the management and operation of brothels**.

UNDP, UNFPA and UNAIDS were instrumental in these alarming reports.

Our 86 partners who are working directly with trafficking survivors around the world were not consulted in the drafting of these reports; we believe that if the reports' recommendations are implemented, efforts to prevent and effectively address sex trafficking will be jeopardized.

Long-term, permanent solutions for decreasing the risk of HIV/AIDS are critical. But they must not come at the expense of anti-trafficking efforts. In order to reduce the rate of HIV/AIDS in prostituted people, we must eliminate the demand for prostitution, by criminalizing the buyers and not the people prostituted. Sex trafficking in the Nordic countries has decreased with this approach.

I have two questions:

1) How can we ensure that survivor-led anti-trafficking organizations are actively consulted with in the future by the UN, not only in the fight against sex trafficking, but also

on other human rights issues which directly affect those are trafficked and exploited in the commercial sex industry, such as HIV/AIDS?

2) How can we ensure that we are all working together to promote the implementation of the Trafficking Protocol?

Thank you for your attention.