

Consultation seeking views on UN Women approach to sex work, the sex trade and prostitution¹

UN Women, grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the UN Charter, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, the empowerment of women, and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, and peace and security. UN Women is, at its core, engaged in the promotion of women's rights.

Currently UN Women does not have an explicit policy position with regard to sex work, the sex trade or prostitution and is in the process of developing such a position. Policy development will be grounded in [international standards that guide UN Women's work](#) and an international human rights framework, including the [Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#), the [Beijing Platform for Action](#) and [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

Our work on policy positioning will include hearing from various people and groups, agencies and organisations which have an interest in this issue including: sex workers/ sex worker groups, survivors of prostitution and groups representing them, feminist and women's rights organizations. The views of other UN entities and Member States will also be heard.

As reflected in the language used to discuss it - sex work, the sex trade, prostitution – this is an area of considerable debate and contest. We invite anyone who so wishes to contribute, no matter your analysis. We want to hear your views.

UN Women has been meeting with various organizations on their analysis of sex work and prostitution for the past few years. Now we will be holding a formal consultation period with a focus on three questions. These questions relate to the current framing of the UN's work, around Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. There is no need to be familiar with these texts or documents, the key principles are clarified in the questions below.

Question 1) The 2030 Agenda commits to universality, human rights and leaving nobody behind. How do you interpret these principles in relation to sex work/trade or prostitution?

Question 2) The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out to [achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls](#). The SDGs also include several targets pertinent to women's empowerment, such as

- a) reproductive rights
- b) women's ownership of land and assets
- c) building peaceful and inclusive societies
- d) ending the trafficking of women²
- e) eliminating violence against women.

¹ This note is available in the six working languages of the United Nations: English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish. To facilitate an inclusive consultation we have committed to receiving responses and information in any of the above languages, though we encourage - where possible - responses in English.

² CEDAW also commits to the ending of trafficking, later defined in the Palermo Protocol [article 3](#).

How do you suggest that policies on sex work/trade/prostitution can promote such targets and objectives?

Question 3) The sex trade is gendered. How best can we protect women in the trade from harm, violence, stigma and discrimination?

Please keep your response to the above questions to a maximum of 1,500 words in total. Your responses to the above questions will be very valuable for UN Women.

Please send your input to consultation@unwomen.org by 16 October 2016 with the subject title "Written submission".

All emails should indicate:

- i) your name
- ii) organization and title, if relevant

In the interests of transparency, all submissions received will be posted online. If you do not want your submission to be posted for reasons of confidentiality or for any other reason, please note this on your response.

Groups or coalitions of stakeholders are welcome to contribute their views together. We are keen to hear from interested parties from across the world, in particular from the global south.

This work will feed into a policy paper that is expected to be made public in 2017.

Thank you for your time and for contributing to this work. Your contribution is valued.

23 August 2016