Sexual Exploitation of Children in Costa Rica

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Geneva, April 3, 2019
• **Fundación Paniamor** - A civil society organization working to combat all forms of violence against children in Costa Rica, including sexual exploitation (SEC)

• **ECPAT International (EI)** - A global network of CSO working for the eradication of all forms of sexual exploitation of children (SEC).

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Plan of the Statement

- Status and developments on SEC in Costa Rica
- Update on the last UPR Review
- Advances, Challenges and Recommendations
  - Legal framework
  - Coordination, implementation/evaluation
  - Prevention
  - Protection of the rights of child victims

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Update on the last UPR Review

- 67 recommendations on children’s rights
- 11 specifically targeting SEC
- 12 addressing child trafficking.

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Advances, Challenges, Recommendations

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Legal framework - Advances and Challenges

- **SEC through trafficking** - Law N° 9545 (2018) which aligns the Penal Code with the OPC
- **SEC in travel and tourism** - Penal Code now punishes with prison whoever promotes or runs programmes, campaigns or advertisements presenting Costa Rica as a tourist destination for CSE or adult prostitution
- **Online SEC** - Penal Code defines Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) in line with the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children (OPSC)
- **Child early and forced marriage** - Law No 9406 (2018) - introduced by PANIAMOR - prohibiting marriage under the age of 18 and penalizing adults in co-living situations with children ages 13 to 18.

No additional funding has been allocated to foster implementation and evaluate effectiveness of the new legislation.

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Coordination, implementation and evaluation – Advances and Challenges

GoCR has established two coordination bodies, at different times - The National Commission against CSE (CONACOES, 1996) and the National Coalition against the Smuggling of Migrants and the Trafficking of Persons (CONNAT, 2013)

The CONACOES has not been in operation since 2018.
Coordination, Implementation and Evaluation - Recommendations

- Activate and strengthen the role and action of the National Commission against SEC (CONACOES)
- Conduct a comprehensive end of cycle evaluation of the Sixth National Action Plan against SEC and adopt a follow-up plan featuring concrete policy measures, mechanisms and objectives, as well as a dedicated budget.
- Adopt the National Policy and the National Action Plan against Human Trafficking (CONATT); and follow up on the effective implementation of both instruments.
- Ensure the timely allocation and disbursement of adequate funding and human resources to projects that fight human trafficking and provide assistance to child victims to secure for their full implementation.
Prevention – Advances and Challenges

- 436 companies had subscribed to the CR Code of Conduct –
- E-Mentors Certification Program” integrated as a child-online safety capacity building and family awareness component under the national program for digital inclusion
- Good practices reported in capacity building amongst community associations operating in high-risk territories,
- GoCR consistently collaborate with international partners to bar registered foreign sex offenders from entering Costa Rica.
Prevention- Recommendations

- Allocate enough funding to raise public awareness about all SEC manifestations with a particular focus on promoting the need to report such offences; and put in place mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of awareness-raising and prevention operations;
- Invest in child empowering prevention programmes to address the root causes and multiple vulnerabilities that place children, families and communities at risk; and promote educational programmes to transform the cultural patterns that contribute to SEC;
- Put in place international travel restrictions for national child sex offenders.
Protection of the rights of SEC victims – Challenges and Recommendation

- GoCR does not operate nor plans to build dedicated shelters for child victims of SEC.

Put in place measures to ensure SEC child victims can fully exercise their right to care and attention in properly funded shelters, staffed by well-trained personnel, and able to offer integrated services (psychological, legal, medical, etc.)

Create the necessary legal and administrative mechanisms for SEC victims to seek compensation.

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WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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