



NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS

Theme for the 7th Annual Meeting, May 2007

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Issue

Human trafficking, often considered the third leading illegal trade after drugs and arms, has many facets: pornography, sexual exploitation, prostitution, organ trafficking, forced labor, etc. This phenomenon, which primarily affects women, teens, and children, constitutes a gross violation of the security, wellbeing, and most fundamental rights of its victims.

Frequently tied to migration, human trafficking exists in every country at various levels. Some countries provide victims, some serve as transit countries, and others are host countries where the victims are exploited. Internal networks are also in operation within countries.

A number of international treaties address human trafficking or one of its aspects. The main instrument is the *United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*, which entered into effect in November 2000 and has been ratified by 118 states to date, and its *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, which entered into effect in December 2003 and has been ratified by 97 states. In the Americas, *Inter-American Convention on International Traffic in Minors* entered into effect in March 1994 and has garnered 13 ratifications.

Rationale

Network members have expressed their interest in studying this theme on multiple occasions. A first series of conferences on the subject was held as part of the Network's Executive Committee meeting in Puebla in March 2006, thereby launching the debate. The unequivocally international character of the theme makes it an ideal choice, as the Network could continue and further develop the work it has begun. The Network could stimulate discussion of human trafficking in a number of areas, including the role of parliamentarians in the ratification and implementation of international instruments; experience on the issue at the legislative, governmental, and social levels that has led to conclusive results; and mechanisms of international cooperation aimed at eradicating this scourge.