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Market research reveals how to inform travellers about child sex tourism

ECPAT UK's (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking) recent research into travellers' understanding of child sex tourism has found that 54% had either seen child sex tourism on holiday or had read a lot about it, whilst 46% were aware of the issue, but had limited knowledge.

The Home Office-funded research was carried out with 38 people in four focus group discussions and aimed to discover their thoughts on campaigns run by organisations against child sex tourism. The research also aimed to find out if travellers would be put off from booking a holiday if the tour operator or travel agent told them that they were working to prevent child sex tourism.

Sixty-one percent said they would not be deterred from booking the holiday, and 34% said that it would make them more likely to book the holiday. However, 5% said they would be less likely to book the holiday. Asked if they thought a tour operator should inform them about child sex tourism, and whether this information should relate to a specific destination, 75% said yes; 41% said they would like to know about the issue in general and 34% wanted destination specific information. But 9% said it would put them off going to a destination.

While the research aimed to understand travellers' views of child sex tourism, it also asked if they would report suspicious activities. Seventy-five percent said they would report the incidence while they were still on holiday, 22% would report on their return home and 3% said they would not report at all. Twenty-three percent said they would inform their tour operator (not all respondents were on holiday with a tour operator), 19% would tell the local police, 15% would inform the hotel manager or staff, 12% would tell local charities and 3% would ignore it. Furthermore, 89% said if they were given information about how to report the suspicion they would be more likely to report, while 11% said it would make no difference.

The results of this research will help ECPAT UK, and its partners, to provide appropriate and effective information to the travelling public on how they can help prevent and protect children from abuse when they are on holiday.

Notes for editors:

1. ECPAT UK is a coalition of nine UK organisations: Anti-Slavery International, Barnardo's, Jubilee Campaign, NSPCC, The Body Shop Foundation, The Children's Society, Save the Children UK, UNICEF UK and World Vision UK.

2. Julia Valdambrini, an independent consultant, co-ordinated the project and authored the final report.

3. The project was advised by a multi-agency advisory group consisting of: the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), Crimestoppers, the Federation of Tour Operators, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Home Office, National Criminal Intelligence Service, Travel Weekly.

4. The Sexual Offences Act 2003, which came into force on 1st May 2004, contains provision for the prosecution in the UK of Britons who offend against children overseas. This extra-territorial legislation repeals the original extra-territorial legislation contained in the Sex Offenders Act 1997. The Act also introduced a new order, the foreign travel order, which will enable the courts, in certain circumstances and on application from a chief officer of police, to prohibit those convicted of sexual offences against children aged under 16 from travelling overseas where there is evidence that they intend to cause serious sexual harm to children in a foreign country.

5. Travellers can report concerns to Crimestoppers in the UK. The number is free in the UK, but there may be charges from phones overseas. The number is 0800 555 111.