To: The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

From: Danish Women’s Society

Subject: General discussion on the TWGCGM

On the occasion of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women preparing a General Recommendation on the Trafficking of Women and Girls in the context of Global Migration, The Danish Women’s Society has read the prepared concept note with great interest and is hereby submitting its contribution.

Gender equality remains a global challenge, and the protection of women’s civil rights and the legal status of women are imperative. In addition, we live in a time where the world is experiencing protracted crisis across continents, and the number of refugees has reached an unprecedented level. This leads to irregular migration where women, adolescents, and girls are the most vulnerable and their risk of being exposed to trafficking, including sexual exploitation, gender-based violence and other harmful practises is high.

Danish Women’s Society has noted that the General Recommendation will not entail a general policy discussion about prostitution. However, the concept note introduces the terms *Forced Prostitution* and *Forced Sexual Exploitation*, neither of which is a well-defined, international or legally accepted term. Danish Women’s Society recommends that the terms are not applied in the deliberation of the General Recommendation and are fully omitted. Danish Women’s Society recommends that the language applied in the General Recommendation is fully aligned with the global context and terminology.

In addition Danish Women’s Society recommends that adolescents are specifically included as a vulnerable group as they are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Referring to the concept note, Danish Women’s Society would like to stress the importance and universality of CEDAW article 6, which imposes a positive obligation on the State Parties to take “all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women end exploitation of prostitution of women”. The positive obligation to protect women (and girls) must be safeguarded and State Parties held accountable to ensure the protection of women and girls. The omission of *“…exploitation of prostitution of women.”* is deeply concerning and will increase the risk of trafficked women being held in modern slavery in addition to being trafficked. Danish Women’s Society recommends that article 6 is included in full and that the universality remains, without discrimination between different groups of women, adolescents and girls.

The concept note is quiet on the vulnerabilities of labour trafficked women to sexual violence, sexual exploitation and the exploitation of prostitution. Danish Women’s Society considers prostitution to be a harmful practise and coping mechanism for vulnerable women, adolescents and girls, and the CEDAW is a critical instrument to ensure that they are protected both under national and international law. Danish Women’s Society considers buying sex an expression of sexual exploitation and abuse and is recommending that it is included in the General Recommendation as harmful and with a recommendation to prohibit the buying of sex services. In prolongation of the previous paragraph, it is essential, and the General Recommendation includes this as violations of human rights and reaffirms the States Positive Obligation to protect women (and adolescents and girls) in accordance with CEDAW article 6.

Danish Women’s Society appreciates the inclusion of health care concerns and inclusion of sexually transmitted diseases, incl. HIV/Aids. However, Danish Women’s Society would like to draw the attention of the Committee to the broader reproductive health care concerns for women and girls. Women, adolescents and girls remain most at risk to sexual exploitation and exploitation of prostitution with huge risk to their reproductive health. This includes HPV cancer, early pregnancies, unwanted pregnancies and, as a consequence, unsafe abortions with an increased risk of mortality or morbidity. On the other spectrum it includes coerced use of contraception. Both ends of the spectrum are gross violations of women’s rights to freely choose if and when to have children. In addition, women, adolescents and girls exposed to sexual exploitation, violence and abuse have experienced a trauma and will be in need of psychosocial support and access to justice. Danish Women’s Society is recommending that these concerns are addressed and included in the General Recommendation.