**Statement by**

**Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers**

I am KayThi Win from Myanmar and I am the Regional Coordinator of the Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers—APNSW. I want to draw attention to two things:

* One: activities against trafficking in my region hurt women workers.
* Two: sex workers in my region work together to fight bad work conditions and trafficking.

Asian sex workers do sex work, and migrate, to earn money. Many of us chose to do sex work, because of bad bosses, work conditions or pay in factory work or domestic work or other work. Some of us borrow money to migrate, or take care of our families, and some of us do sex work in bad conditions. But we are workers.

Activities to fight trafficking in my region and countries where we work do not distinguish between voluntary sex work and trafficking. These activities seek to rescue us from our work. Police break into our work places and beat us, rape us and kidnap our children in order to ‘save’ us.’ The government evicts us and our families to ‘save’ us[[1]](#endnote-1) [[2]](#endnote-2) [[3]](#endnote-3). We are arrested, jailed away from friends and family, and deported to ‘save’ us[[4]](#endnote-4) [[5]](#endnote-5) [[6]](#endnote-6) [[7]](#endnote-7) [[8]](#endnote-8). They take our money to ‘save’ us[[9]](#endnote-9). In “rehabilitation centers,” we are forced to sew clothes or make jewelry for even less money than in the jobs we left to do sex work to ‘save’ us[[10]](#endnote-10) [[11]](#endnote-11).

These activities do not address exploitation or trafficking. They hurt women workers.

But sex workers in Asia work together to fight exploitation and trafficking[[12]](#endnote-12) [[13]](#endnote-13). In India, VAMP uses sex worker committees to address exploitation and fight trafficking and underage sex work[[14]](#endnote-14). In Thailand, sex workers started the Can Do Bar, a sex-worker-led bar based on ILO decent work standards[[15]](#endnote-15). In Myanmar, AMA helps sex workers have secure money and manage and save, to give us economic power.[[16]](#endnote-16) And individual sex workers help others in bad work conditions leave and work independently. These are very few of many examples.

Like other workers, we sex workers gain economic power by organizing collectively and demanding our rights. This economic power gives us the power to leave exploitation; it gives us power to bargain with employers and to choose where we work, for whom we work, and what we do for work.

With this in mind, sex workers in Asia ask that laws and activities to fight traffic recognize sex work as work, and do not hurt us.

We ask that the committee support workers’ rights and worker organizing approach to fighting trafficking and exploitation. This includes support of worker-led programs. **Including** sex worker-led programs. It also includes a call to end laws that criminalize worker organizing and our work.

Finally, we ask the committee to support rights for migrant workers, including migrant sex workers. This includes the right to report crimes without fear of deportation.

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16. See footnote 12, pp 28-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)