

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Council of Europe: Call on member states to ratify the European Convention against Trafficking

On the occasion of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's urgent debate on trafficking in women in advance a feared increase in trafficking during the Fifa World Cup Amnesty International reiterates its call on all member states of the Council of Europe to take the necessary steps to ratify and on the European Community to accede to the European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings without further delay. Members of the Parliamentary Assembly should step up efforts to this end in their national parliaments.

Trafficking is a violation of human rights and an offence to human dignity and integrity. Governments must ensure protection and respect of the rights of trafficked people -- including women and children trafficked into forced prostitution. The Convention sets out the minimum requirements for such protection. It requires states that become parties to it to take measures, individually and collectively, to prevent trafficking, to prosecute those responsible for trafficking and to take specific measures to protect and support trafficked persons.

So far 26 of the 46 member states of the Council of Europe have signed the Convention; it will enter into force after ten states have ratified or acceded.

Amnesty International considers that the Convention will substantially strengthen the protection of the rights of victims of trafficking in Europe once it has entered into force and is widely ratified and implemented.

Background

Due to an expected increase in trafficking of women for forced prostitution during the Fifa World Cup in Germany in June 2006 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe approved yesterday, at the opening of its spring session, a request for a debate under its urgent procedure.

The Parliamentary Assembly is one of the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe and meets four times a year. It is composed of members of national parliaments of the 46 Council of Europe member states. For years the Assembly has been calling on states to take concerted action to stop trafficking in human beings and to protect the victims, including by drafting a Council of Europe Convention.

The European Convention on Action against Trafficking was opened for signature and ratification at the Council of Europe's Third Summit of Heads of State and Government, which took place from 16 to 17 May 2005 in Warsaw, Poland. The Action Plan adopted at the Summit contains a call for the early entry into force of the Convention and widest possible ratification. The Convention is also open for signature and ratification by the European Community and a number of states that are not members of the Council of

Europe but participated in the drafting (Canada, the Holy See, Japan, Mexico and the United States). Once the Convention enters into force, the Council of Europe may invite other non-member states to become parties to the Convention.

Amnesty International together with many other national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continue to campaign for enhanced protection of the human rights of trafficked persons.