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action of churches together in scotland

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Dear Sir or Madam,

Submission concerning the Human Trafficking and Exploitation
(Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill in the Northern Ireland Assembly
by the Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group.

1. As Convener of the Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group (membership listed below) I write on behalf of the Group to offer our support for the above bill in the Northern Ireland Assembly.
2. The Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group was established in June 2011 and has representation from the Baptist Union of Scotland (awaiting confirmation) Church of Scotland, Church of Scotland Guild, Methodist Church, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Roman Catholic Church, Salvation Army, Scottish Episcopal Church, United Reformed Church. It exists to exchange information concerning the member churches' activities and policies against human trafficking and their support for the victims of human trafficking. It is also seeks to work toward the formulation of joint policies in the churches concerning human trafficking.
3. Christians believe that people are made in the image of God and are loved equally by God. Therefore no man, woman or child should ever be treated as a commodity or possession. The Biblical tradition, including the words and actions of Jesus, urges Christians to stand up against injustice and help those who are vulnerable, seek freedom for those in bondage and offer protection to all in need. Human trafficking violates the sanctity of the human spirit. In addition insights from a liberation theology perspective, with its focus on freedom from oppression, consider the actions of the trafficker not just the victim in an analysis of power and wealth as part of the quest for justice.
4. **Clauses 1-8.** We recognise the complexities of human trafficking and the actions of traffickers which cross international boundaries and are a form of serious and organised crime. We therefore believe that it is vital that across the jurisdictions of the United Kingdom there are robust human trafficking laws and protection and support for victims. We view the steps that the Northern Ireland Assembly is taking to be trail blazing in this regard and we sincerely hope that similar legislation will soon follow in the both the Scottish and UK Parliaments.
5. **Clauses 9-14.** In line with our theological rationale we welcome the victim focussed nature of the proposed Act. We welcome the provision for the non-prosecution of victims of human trafficking and we are particularly pleased to see measures to ensure the proper support of victims of human trafficking including the granting of financial compensation to victims. Recognising that the experience of giving evidence against a trafficker takes great courage on the part of the victim we are pleased to see the measures within the bill which seek to minimise the potential of secondary trauma.
6. **Clauses 15-16.** We welcome the measures within the proposed Bill for prevention and reporting through the publication of a strategy and the appointment of an independent Northern Ireland Rapporteur on trafficking.

7. We would wish to offer particular comment on **Clause 6** of the proposed Act.
8. We are specifically pleased to see within the Act proposals to make paying for sexual services an offence (section 6.) We believe that human trafficking and prostitution are inextricably linked and the theological rationale which leads us to reject human trafficking as an acceptable form of behaviour also extends to prostitution.
9. We concur with the view of the Swedish government that 'international trafficking in human beings could not flourish but for the existence of local prostitution markets where men [*and women*] are willing and able to buy and sell [*men*], women and children for sexual exploitation.'¹ This would have major implications for the safety, health, wellbeing and dignity of those women, young people and men who are involved in prostitution. We also believe that measures to tackle demand for prostitution will therefore be effective in reducing the numbers of men, women and children, trafficked into Northern Ireland for sexual exploitation.²
10. We are encouraged that evidence from Scotland³ indicates that those who have purchased sex do see that legal or financial penalties or public exposure could act as an effective deterrent to purchasing sex if sufficiently well enforced and we believe attitudes in Northern Ireland are likely to be similar. This potential reduction in demand for sexual services therefore could lead to a reduction in the number of people trafficked into Northern Ireland for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Evidence from Sweden, on whose legislation this clause is based, would suggest that following the introduction of similar legislation to that which is proposed, not only has demand for prostitution reduced⁴ but Sweden has also become an 'unattractive environment' for human trafficking and the incidences of human trafficking for sexual exploitation have dropped.
11. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We do not wish to be considered to give evidence to the committee.

Yours faithfully,



Revd. Lindsey Sanderson
Convener, Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Group

¹ Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communication (2004) Fact sheet: *Prostitution and Trafficking in Women*

² According to the UK Government's National Referral Mechanism published statistics between Jan-March 2012 18 people were referred from Scotland as potential victims of human trafficking of whom 15 were trafficked for sexual exploitation. Between April and June 2012 22 people were referred from Scotland as potential victims of trafficking of whom 5 were trafficked for sexual exploitation.

<http://www.soca.gov.uk/about-soca/about-the-ukhtc/national-referral-mechanism/statistics>

³ Macleod J., Farley M., Anderson L., & Goulding J. *Challenging Men's Demand in Scotland: A research report based on interviews with 110 men who bought women in prostitution*. (Women's Support project, Glasgow 2008 pp.26-27)

⁴ Extract from the Swedish government report SOU 2010:49 The Ban against the purchase of sexual services. An Evaluation 1998-2008. Section B English summary of the report p. 9