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UN concerned by the scale of child prostitution in Ukraine

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The UN believes that child prostitution and human trafficking involving children are major problems in Ukraine. These were the conclusions reached by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography Juan Miguel Petit following his visit to Ukraine at the end of October 2006. He has submitted his report to the Human Rights Committee.

The report apparently says that 10% of the victims of human trafficking are aged between 13 and 18. Half involved in trans-border trafficking are sent to neighbouring countries, mainly Russia.

It speaks of children being exploited for street trading, as servants, in agriculture, as dancers, waiters or for sexual exploitation. Most often they are expected to become dancers, beggars or provide sexual services, regardless of what they expected.

A characteristic feature of trafficking in Ukraine, according to the report, is that in most cases the children become victims within the country. The traffickers lure their victims into debt and then force them to provide such services to pay this off. It is extremely rare that they are able to break free of such debt bondage.

The Special Rapporteur stated that there are many trafficking victims

who were previously not taken into consideration and they do not receive assistance either abroad, or when they return home. He mentioned that child prostitution had increased over recent years. According to figures from the Ukrainian Institute for Social Research, of women providing sexual services, 11% were aged between 12 and 15 and 20% from 16 to 17. He said that even 10-year-old girls have been drawn into prostitution.

Juan Miguel Petit expressed particular concern that pimps, traffickers and producers of pornographic materials should be using children for their own ends. He had learned of numerous advertisements in the media and tourist brochures about “weddings”, “visits” and other services for tourists which as far as he could see were not clearly regulated or controlled.

He stressed that with most Western countries now no longer requiring visas to come to Ukraine, the country was becoming more and more popular as a destination for sex tourism. He feared that it was here that exploitation of minors was becoming more prevalent.

The Special Rapporteur said that Ukraine needed to develop a new model for protecting children’s rights or there would be serious consequences for future generations. He had prepared a number of recommendations.

He also called on the law enforcement agencies to control the activities of marriage agencies and closed night clubs, where child prostitution and human trafficking involving children are rife. He also expressed doubts about the border rulers regulating the travel of minors abroad.