



Only Rights Can Stop the Wrongs



ASIA * PACIFIC
NETWORK OF
SEX WORKERS



STATEMENT

Statement of Support for the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls regarding their Position Paper on Eliminating Discrimination Against Sex Workers and Securing their Human Rights

Date: November 2023

We the undersigned, as global and regional networks of sex worker-led organisations, would like to express our support for the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls' position paper, "[Eliminating discrimination against sex workers and securing their human rights](#)", published in October.





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The position paper recognises that sex workers are rights bearers and represents a major human rights victory. The paper is grounded in evidence-based research and informed by consultations conducted with diverse sex workers across geographical regions, including those living with HIV, those who have experienced violence, exploitation, and abuse first-hand. In doing so, the position paper does not seek to deny the injustices which can occur in sex work and highlights how the criminalisation of any aspect of sex work, and other punitive law, policies and practices exacerbate, rather than ameliorate, these harms.

Decades of community-led research and advocacy acknowledges the continuum of experiences that exist within sex work, from empowering to exploitative and has evidenced that structural barriers render many sex workers susceptible to violence, exploitation, and abuse. These experiences neither negate sex workers' ability to make autonomous decisions in their own lives, nor undermine their legitimacy as human rights advocates. The perception that sex workers are either empowered activists or exploited victims is a false dichotomy which impedes progress and denies the complex realities of sex work.

The Working Group's recommendations are a critical addition in the struggle to address a range of rights for sex workers. We applaud the Working Group's commitment to consulting with sex workers with diverse lived experiences whilst upholding the principles of equality, non-discrimination, agency, and bodily autonomy. This nuanced approach is essential not only for promoting gender equality, but for countering the ideological narratives which have failed to protect, respect, and fulfil sex workers' fundamental human rights.

Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP)

Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW)

African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA)

European Sex Workers' Rights Alliance (ESWA)

Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SWAN)

La Plataforma LatinoAmérica de Personas que EjeRcen el Trabajo Sexual (PLAPERTS)