I, Rachel Moran, am writing on behalf of the members of SPACE International, the group I founded in the spring of 2012 to give voice to those of us whose views had up to that point been roundly ignored. Our membership spans seven nations. All of the activists who make up our group are women who have lived the reality of prostitution and many of us provide frontline services for women in prostitution today.

It is our collective view, based on what we lived and witnessed in the sex-trade during the time of our involvement and what we witness today in the lives of the women we provide services to, that the burden of prostitution legislation should fall squarely on the shoulders of those who create the demand for the trade.

The only legal framework in the world which seeks to address demand is the ‘Nordic Model.’ It is the only social justice framework for dealing with prostitution and it operates by criminalising the demand for paid sexual access to peoples bodies, by decriminalising the sale of such access by prostituted individuals, by criminalising pimps and traffickers and offering viable solutions to prostitution in the form of social supports that include help with housing, childcare, counselling, addiction services, education and training. It is our considerable personal and professional experience that leads us to collectively conclude that this is the only legal framework anywhere that we could formally endorse.

We believe that calls by groups, such as Amnesty International, to decriminalise “all operational aspects” of prostitution are wholly wrong-footed and a gift to prostitutors, brothel-keepers and pimps. Under such legislation, exploitation of the most vulnerable not only becomes impossible to criminalise, but is malformed into a viable economic enterprise.

As the most visible, most active sex-trade survivors group in the world right now, we are routinely contacted by women both currently prostituted and formerly prostituted across a wide range of legal regimes. It is obvious to us that the women from New Zealand, Holland, Germany and numerous other countries and jurisdictions where pimping and procuring is legalised/decriminalised suffer higher degrees of trauma as a consequence of having been subjected to human rights violations on an industrial state-sanctioned scale. The decriminalisation of their exploiters has abandoned them wholly; it is perfectly legal to abuse people, most of whom are women and girls, for sexual pleasure and/or financial gain within these legalised/decriminalised systems.

We would also like to bring to the attention of the Committee the remarkable about-turn that constitutes the attitude of pro-prostitution lobbyists generally in the world today. Two decades ago those who argued for acceptance and tolerance of prostitution passionately put forth the view that Holland-style legalised prostitution was the answer. Such legislation has proven to be a disaster, as women’s rights group of the day had always said it was and would be. Today in Germany, as a direct consequence of the political lobbying of such groups, there are an estimated 450,000 prostituted women and girls in Germany, many of them from surrounded impoverished former Soviet Bloc countries like Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria.
Multi story brothels, some up to twelve stories high, offer different ‘speciality services’ on each floor. There is, for example, ‘the trans woman floor,’ where those who are socially marginalised and excluded from mainstream employment on account of their trans-status service the sex buying men of Germany. There is ‘the pregnant woman’s floor,’ where women are expected to commodify the presence of unborn children in their own wombs for the sexual pleasure of men. There is ‘the gang bang floor,’ where young women and teenaged girls are used by up to and sometime more than half a dozen men at a time. There are cut price rates offered to unemployed men and OAP’s, such is the normalisation of paid sexual access to women in Germany now, it is considered a right to which all men should have access. There are 500 brothels in Berlin alone and sex tourism has run out of all control.

Let it be clear that this situation exists as a result of the lobbying of the same people who are calling for New Zealand style decriminalisation today. Now the world’s politicians are expected to again trust the advice of pro-prostitution lobby groups and believe that the free-for-all that constitutes New Zealand style legislation is somehow markedly different, although it is made up of the very same basic components: the decriminalisation of pimps, brothel keepers and punters (johns.)

The call for decriminalisation of pimping, punting and brothel-keeping within a New Zealand style legal system ignores a raft of inconvenient truths, evidence and research, not to mention several human rights instruments, but what we feel it ignores most glaringly is the rights of women to provide for their families and themselves without having to submit to unwanted sexual penetration. We are not naive or inexperienced enough with regard to this issue to assume, as Amnesty International does, that the circumstances of a woman’s life having corralled her into a brothel means she has fully and freely consented to be there. Prostitution is a millennia-old form of oppression against women and the lie that it is freely chosen is perhaps the cruellest aspect of it.

Prostitution is a system within which parasitic individuals – almost always males – use the economic marginalisation of other individuals – usually women and girls – to gain sexual access to their bodies. To condone this practice of exploitation is to copper-fasten the social subordination of women within the very legal frameworks of our world. We, the members of SPACE International, declare to this Committee and to the world that there has been no greater structure of dehumanisation legally sanctioned since the transatlantic slave trade.

This could easily be a very lengthy submission, but instead I will close with the comments of some of our members, and ask that when hearing oral evidence the Committee invite myself and Fiona Broadfoot, our UK and Irish members, to testify.

Sincerely,

Rachel Moran

Annex

“I believe the Nordic Model is by far the most effective way of addressing the issues surrounding the sex trade. It places the criminal responsibility on the Sex Buyer, supports girls and women to exit and seeks to combat sex trafficking. It is about time the world responds to prostitution as an act of violence. It is not Sex it is abuse and it is not a job like any other when your occupational hazards are Rape and murder.”
Fiona Broadfoot - UK

“The Nordic model is a strong instrument to change an entire society for the better, to support a respectful relationship between men and women. I live in a country that has no regulations at all that officially supports the sex industry, the profits, the brothel keepers and other profiteers from the sex trade – at the cost of the women and others in prostitution. This changes the society in which I live for the worse. Prostitution is entirely legal. The living circumstances of the women in prostitution are marked by poverty and lack of education. Many experience their very first sexual encounter with a German sex buyer / punter. Many of the women live and “work” in the same room, sleep in the bed in which they served men throughout the entire day, for hours on end – Professional training and information courses for teachers are offered, guided tours through red light districts and various brothels included. It is completely normal that men buy women for sexual use, that young men celebrate their 18th birthday in a brothel. That demented men are being abused by “sexual assistants” or “surrogate partners”. Here, a man sees it as his right to get the kind of sex that he envision, whenever HE feels like having it. And the women need money and have no options. The Nordic model addresses the right target, the man, the demand. It shifts the responsibility on him and offers real options to the women. I wish for a world that respects women so much that those who buy women for sexual use and rape them are being held accountable.”

Marie Merlinker – Germany

The Nordic Model that addresses the demand for prostitution and human trafficking has been demonstrated as an effective approach to curbing the growing demand for the commercialized sex industries - often the end destination of sex trafficking. The Nordic Model provides a route to exit exploitation, hold buyers and sellers accountable, uphold Human Rights, and promote gender equality. We, the world body cannot put forth human rights documents, treaties, and law that provides these for all while denying the same to exploited, marginalized, and largely poor women and children worldwide.

Jeanette Westbrook – USA

“The Nordic Model is the most comprehensive set of laws and ideas that finally addresses men’s entitlement to women’s bodies for their own pleasure, sometimes violently and heartlessly, and holds them accountable. It not only ends the devastation that the sex trade inflicts on the most vulnerable but calls for the development of programs to assist those caught in systems of exploitation, pointing out the growing economic conditions here in the US and throughout the world, for those in situations of increased vulnerability; which has never been addressed appropriately before.”

Cherie Jimenez – USA
“In order to stop the Demand for prostitution we must hold men accountable for their behavior in the buying of women...this can only be accomplished through the implementation of the Nordic model in Britain and throughout the world.”

Vednita Carter – USA

“Prostitution is the hardest violence against women in the world.”

Rosen Hitcher – France

“I was not put on this earth to service multitudes of men I was not placed on this earth to have my torture and abuse be called work. I do not see prostitution as a viable source of employment or empowerment I see it as; abuse misogyny colonialism and capitalism I see it as male privilege. I see it as hatred towards women and girls and why I feel this way is because I lived it from 12 years to 22 and still to this day I suffer from the legacy that it left with me.”

Bridget Perrier – Canada

“The Nordic model is the only solution to the devastating inequity that results from prostitution as an accepted practice. It returns us to that which separates us from lower forms of life, as stated in the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.”

Marian Hatcher - USA