

International determination was recently brought to bear on the issue when the government of Sweden hosted the World Congress on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm in August 1996. The congress was an initiative of the international non-governmental organization (NGO), End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) and was hosted in co-operation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Canada's Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy led a Canadian delegation that joined more than 1300 experts, elected officials and other decision makers from over 119 countries to condemn the odious practice of commercial sexual exploitation of children and to formally adopt a declaration and plan of action aimed at stopping it.

For its part, Canada has, through its ODA, supported a variety of local initiatives in the developing world to attack the roots of sexual exploitation by promoting children's rights, providing protection and education, and assisting the victims of the sex trade, in order to provide families with viable alternatives. In Thailand for example, Canada funded construction of a dormitory that allows 100 hilltribe girls to attend school. In Nepal, a video on the trafficking of women and girls into India was produced, with support from Canada, for use in awareness campaigns in local villages. Many Canadian NGOs are actively involved in efforts to end child sexual exploitation. One example is Save the Children Canada which supports centres for street children that offer alternatives to living and working on the streets.

In 1988, Canada introduced amendments to its Criminal Code to provide domestic legislation concerning juvenile prostitution as part of a broader package of reforms to address child sexual abuse. In 1993, the Criminal Code was again amended to include separate statutory prohibitions against child pornography. Currently, Bill C-27 is before Canada's Parliament and it proposes additional Criminal Code amendments to strengthen the provisions relating to child prostitution. The proposed amendments would also permit the prosecution in Canada of Canadian nationals and permanent residents who engage in prostitution-related activities with children while abroad: a practice commonly known as "sex-tourism." Canada continues to push for an Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child dealing with the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography that would include provisions obliging states to adopt legislation dealing with child sex-tourism.

September 1996