

**Inter-American Cooperation Program for the Prevention and Eradication  
of Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Adolescents**

**Considering the Internet and  
Travel and Tourism as settings for SEC**  
**Issues Note N° 2/2020**



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## Considering the Internet and Travel and Tourism as settings for SEC

COVID-19 has generated major impacts at individual, family, community, national and global levels, affecting all human rights.

Regarding the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, in particular, there has been an impact on modalities and settings where the phenomenon occurs, as well as on the capacity of the Protection System to act, both in terms of prevention and the provision of care for victims, and the prosecution of the offence.

In this context, two settings have become significant and require particular attention: information and communication technologies and tourism and travel. Areas in which, however, work on prevention has been going on for years.

In the first case, as noted, in recent months there has been a considerable increase in the time that children and adolescents devote to using technological devices and the Internet for multiple purposes, making them potential victims of various forms of rights violations in this area (linked to identity, privacy, violence in general) and, in particular, to different forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.

For its part, travel and tourism have come to a complete halt owing to the measures implemented to control the spread of the virus. Tourism is one of the main sources of income for many countries and communities, so we can assume that once this crisis has been overcome, all available resources will be used to reactivate it. Therefore, together with health protocols, work is required that includes a strong commitment to the prevention of all forms of exploitation in this area.

In this context, in this **Issues Note No. 2** of the *Inter-American Programme for the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Exploitation and Smuggling of and Trafficking in Children*, we consider it appropriate to widely disseminate the **Outcome Paper** of the *Fifth Subregional Meeting "Prevention, Protection and Restitution of Rights in the face of the Sexual Exploitation of Children (SEC): Experiences for Reflection"* (Quito, 2019), jointly organized by the IIN-OAS and various public and private institutions in Ecuador, at which both topics were addressed, with the conclusions and recommendations made for each of them.

Access the presentations made by the various participating States and organizations [here](#) (available in Spanish).

## FIFTH SUBREGIONAL MEETING

### “Prevention, Protection and Restitution of Rights in the face of the Sexual Exploitation of Children (SEC): Experiences for Reflection”.

28-29 August

Quito-Ecuador

The FIFTH SUB-REGIONAL MEETING took place in Quito, Ecuador on 28 and 29 August 2019: “Prevention, Protection and Restitution of Rights in the face of the Sexual Exploitation of Children (SEC): Experiences for Reflection”, jointly organized by the Inter-American Children’s Institute (IIN-OAS), the National Council for Cross-Generational Equality (CNII, for its acronym in Spanish), the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES), the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR), the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), the QUITU RAYMI Foundation (ECPAT Ecuador), ChildFund and Plan International.

The IIN-OAS’s technical liaison officers on sexual exploitation from the States of the South of the region attended the event. Representatives of the following States took part: Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay. It was also attended by representatives of the Regional Task Force of the Americas (GARA) for the prevention of sexual exploitation in travel and tourism and ACCOR, as regional bodies, and of civil society organizations from Bolivia (EducoBolivia) and Chile (NGO Roots).

The presence of technicians from different national governmental and non-governmental institutions, both from Quito and from the interior of the country, should be particularly mentioned.

The general objective of the meeting was: *to exchange specific experiences in the region in relation to the prevention, protection and redress of rights in the face of the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (SEC), with a particular focus on forms of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents on the Internet and sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Travel and Tourism; to reflect on these practices and draw lessons that strengthen the capacities of States and societies to safeguard the rights of affected persons.*

In addition, the specific objectives were:

1. Identify forms of SEC, with a special focus on those prevalent in the new information technologies and the tourism sector.

2. Share good practices in the prevention of SEC linked to travel and tourism and information technologies in countries in the region.
3. Share proposals and experiences relating to protection against SEC in the context of travel and tourism and information technologies, promoting the self-protection of children and adolescents.
4. Promote the inclusion of child and youth organizations in the development of responses to rights violations threats.

In keeping with these objectives, a two-day event was proposed in order to address SEC in travel and tourism and SEC in the Internet and information technologies, respectively. **Keynote addresses** on each of these topics were delivered by regional agencies and civil society and **panels** were held, with the participation of State delegates.

The work carried out during this Fifth Meeting gave rise to this paper, which seeks to reflect the main ideas put forward, as well as principal concerns and proposals. This paper has been made available to all Meeting participants and will be open to input and suggestions from joint organizers and presenters for 10 days. After that time, any contributions received shall be included and the final draft of the paper produced.

As a starting point, we should clarify the concepts and phenomena of sexual exploitation and trafficking. These are different offences. They are, on occasion, linked to one another: trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. However, there is also sexual exploitation that does not occur within the context of human trafficking; and, at the same time, trafficking in persons occurs for the purpose of other types of exploitation. It is therefore necessary to have legislation and institutions in place to respond to both phenomena, taking into account the specific features of each.

## Sexual exploitation of children and youth in travel and tourism

All States in the subregion have comprehensive **regulatory frameworks** for the recognition and protection of the rights of children and adolescents, as well as in relation to the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and trafficking in persons, which serve as a framework to address these situations in the context of travel and tourism. However, the exploitation of children and youth in tourism or the promotion of the sexual exploitation of children in tourism is not always specifically criminalized.

In this area, light was shed on the punishment (legal and social) meted out to the various actors involved in exploitation, especially those who pay for sexual intercourse or activities with children and adolescents, considering such children and youth as victims.

In relation to **public policies**, preventive actions predominate, driven mainly by the tourism sector itself or by the sector together with protection bodies.

Shared experiences showed evidence of the crucial role that the tourism sector, both public and private, plays in this issue. Hence the importance of working with all stakeholders involved in tourism: governing bodies, hotels, transport, travel agencies, restaurants.

Good practice includes awareness-raising and training for all hotel staff, with clear indications on how to deal with a situation in which a violation of the rights of children and adolescents is suspected.

Also relevant were the experiences shared in relation to intervention in major events and/or national holidays, which, due to their very nature (large numbers of people gathering, many of whom do not belong to the locality, and laxity of rules), become propitious opportunities for sexual exploitation.

In view of the essential role of the tourism sector, the inclusion of Ministries/Services/Institutes of Tourism in **inter-agency coordination venues** (Committees, Commissions, Boards) formed in the States to address SEC or trafficking is valued, so that they can undertake an appropriate role, in keeping with their jurisdictions.

The main challenge is the **lack of regulation and control of transitional accommodation venues** which, as they are not considered tourism providers, are not included in the procedures and requirements imposed by the Ministries/Services/Institutes of Tourism and which, therefore, can be highly vulnerable areas. **The same concern arises regarding other forms of leasing through applications (such as Airbnb), which lack controls.**

In addition, **not all States have National Codes of Conduct to which the sector's actors commit** and, in addition, the initiative is left to the discretion and willingness of operators.

Finally, it was deemed important to involve academia, both to contribute to knowledge building in order to encourage learning about the phenomena and adjusting practices, and to introduce the subject in vocational training. In this context, the training of technicians and tourism operators who are aware of the concept of sustainable tourism compatible with the promotion of human rights is particularly important.

## Sexual exploitation of children and adolescents on the Internet and information technologies

The main premise put forward was that ignorance, coupled with the irresponsible management of technologies, is what makes this field so highly conducive to exploitation.

All States in the subregion have comprehensive **regulatory frameworks** for the recognition and protection of the rights of children and adolescents, as well as in relation to the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and trafficking in persons, which serve as a framework to address these situations in the context of the Internet and information technology.

There are also specific laws that seek to protect children and adolescents on the Internet, particularly against harmful content. Also noteworthy is the incorporation in Criminal Codes of “technological means” used as a way to infringe rights; or laws on SEC that include specifications on the use of these means to commit offences.

Despite these legislative advances, the speed of technology development and the diversification of its forms of use pose ongoing challenges, making it difficult to maintain legislation covering all emerging situations.

With regard to **public policies**, there was a focus on awareness-raising activities on the various forms of the phenomenon. However, the States present did not put forward any specific actions for prevention, intervention, and the promotion of the responsible use of the Internet.

In view of the generation gap existing in relation to the use and knowledge of technologies, cross-generational work is necessary, with the involvement of **the State, the family and society, as duty bearers, together with children and adolescents.**

In relation to this, the importance of involving new actors arose: the Ministry of Technology and Communications and the private sector (telephone companies, Internet service providers). The specialization of police forces is also necessary, as is the training of persons who come into contact with children and adolescents (families, teachers, leaders, protection personnel) so that they can adequately guide those who face at-risk situations.

In this area, the main challenge was seen to be the lack of knowledge, in institutions and society in general, regarding the Internet and what happens on the web.

## Recommendations

Based on the challenges identified in each of the topics addressed, the following recommendations were made:

- Establish controls for transient accommodation sites and other leasing arrangements. In the understanding that this regulation is not the responsibility of the Ministry/Secretariat/Service/Tourism Institute, it is necessary to generate inter-agency coordination in order to ensure the regulation and control (if none exists) of these sites, and therefore to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.
- The States, through the governing body for tourism, should adopt their own self-regulatory mechanisms or Codes of Conduct, or provide special recognition of corporate social responsibility initiatives or existing Codes, valuing and encouraging their existence by means of different types of strategies.
- Increase knowledge regarding the Internet and promote a higher level of training for protection personnel, as well as the availability of technology, and seek inter-agency coordination with the agencies that have the greatest strengths in this field.
- Promote the responsibility of private actors in the communications sector in the prevention of SEC through ICTs and the identification of possible cases.
- Provide children and adolescents with tools to make good use of the Internet and information technologies, using the advantages that this medium offers for the realization and enjoyment of rights, as well as to manage at-risk situations that may arise while they surf the Internet.
- Promote cross-generational dialogue, in order to strengthen the protective role of the adult world in a context of respect and recognition of the capacities of children and adolescents.
- Make appropriate budget allocations for the issue of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. A lack of resources prevents the good laws that have been achieved from translating into practice.
- Promote coordination with academia, with two objectives: on the one hand, to ensure the introduction of the subject of human rights, the human rights of children and adolescents, and SEC in particular, within professional curricula; on the other, to promote knowledge building regarding these phenomena.

Finally, we welcome the holding of this Fifth Subregional Meeting, highlighting the wealth of the exchanges carried out and the variety of participating institutions, and we recommend promoting their continuity.

Quito, 29 August 2019