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General news >> Tuesday August 19, 2008

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Abuse of children on the rise, meeting told

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ACHARA ASHAYAGACHAT

The Asia-Pacific region needs specific laws to monitor and counter child pornography being promoted over the Internet, activists against the sexual exploitation of children say.

They were speaking at the East Asia and Pacific preparatory meeting for the World Congress III Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, in Bangkok.

The congress, organised by Ecpat International, an international non-profit organisation network, will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from Nov 25-28.

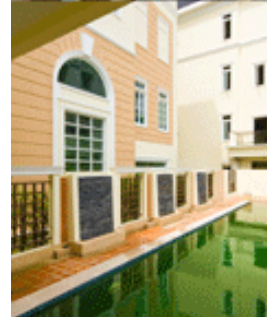
Meeting chair Amihan Abueva said clear definitions of child pornography, the prohibiting of mere possession of child pornography, and protecting children from being groomed for commercial sexual exploitation over the Internet were all areas where laws were still weak.

Some examples could be taken from New Zealand, which had some of the world's most comprehensive laws against child pornography, she added.

Ms Abueva said sharing information on child sex tourism continued on Internet networks. This increased the level of global child sex tourism.

Children were still being lured or forced into the sex industry in many countries, including Cambodia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand.

She called on the countries of the Mekong sub-region _ Cambodia, China, Laos, Burma, Vietnam and Thailand _ to agree on a concrete code of conduct against child sex tourism and exploitation of children through the Internet.



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Panita Kambhu, the head of the Social Development and Welfare Department, said a comprehensive law against human trafficking had only been in effect in Thailand since June 5. The ministry was coordinating the drafting of subordinate regulations to deal practically with human trafficking.

Hopefully, these regulations would be ready in less than a year, she said.

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