

State Failure to Address Root Cause of Prostitution Exposed, 2012, Wallace Mawire

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) committee says it is concerned at the state's failure to address the root causes of trafficking and prostitution in Zimbabwe. This is revealed in the report of the CEDAW Fifty-first session held in Geneva on 13 February to 2 March 2012. The CEDAW committee says the failure to also address the root causes of poverty, impedes the state's efforts to address the issues in a serious way. "The committee remains concerned at the continuing prevalence of trafficking in women and girls in the country, at the lack of statistical sex disaggregated data, as well as at the low reporting rate," the UN report notes. The CEDAW committee says that while it notes the existence of the reception and support centres at Beitbridge and Plumtree border posts to receive returnees from neighboring countries, it is concerned at the lack of shelters and counseling services for victims of trafficking and prostitution, as well as the lack of information provided on the existence and implementation of regional and bilateral memoranda of understanding or agreements with other countries on trafficking.

The committee has called on Zimbabwe to fully implement Article 6 of the Convention through addressing the root causes of trafficking and prostitution, including poverty, to eliminate vulnerability of girls and women to sexual exploitation and trafficking and to undertake efforts for the recovery and social integration of the victims. Providing training on how to identify and deal with victims of trafficking and also training on the anti-trafficking legislation to the judiciary, law enforcement officials, border guards and social workers in all parts of the country, especially in rural and remote areas. Ensuring systematic monitoring and periodic evaluation and analysis of data on trafficking and exploitation of women in prostitution and to include such data in the next periodic report to be tabled in 2016.

Increasing efforts at international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination to prevent trafficking through information exchange and to harmonize legal procedures aiming at prosecution of traffickers. Taking necessary steps to ensure that trafficked women and girls have access to quality medical care, counseling, financial support, adequate housing and training opportunities as well as access to free legal services.

Zimbabwe has also been called upon to ratify the protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking, especially women and children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. At the Geneva Convention, Zimbabwe was represented by Ms. Olivia Muchena, Minister of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development, Minister of State Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration, as well as representatives from relevant ministries with expertise in the areas covered by the convention.