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Dear Amnesty International,

Please vote Yes to the policy on decriminalization of sex work.

Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW) is a sex worker led regional network that promotes the health and human rights of female, male and transgender sex workers. APNSW represents 31 organizations in 23 countries.

Sex work has a long history in the Asia Pacific region, pre-dating colonial occupations and laws, and thriving as a significant, if hidden, contributor to the economy.

However, sex workers face many obstacles to realizing their human rights, including violence at the hands of police and clients. We encounter stigma in our families and neighborhoods, and discrimination in access to justice and healthcare - including for sexual and reproductive health and HIV treatment.

Sex worker led organizations and networks, public health bodies, and the human rights community are increasingly aware of the imbalance of power that criminalization of sex work causes, including its impact on effective response to HIV. People working to end HIV/AIDS have long realized that condoms are not enough; we must address stigma and discrimination against marginalized and criminalized communities to end this epidemic.

APNSW welcomes the well-researched and evidence-based Amnesty International proposal that joins the chorus of calls to decriminalize sex work in order to give sex workers more control over their working situations. Decriminalization will help to normalize relations with police, and help realize sex workers' rights to be free from violence and protected by the law.

APNSW rejects the ideology of "abolition" as it denies the ability of those who make adult choices to engage in consensual sex work to think for themselves. We are saddened by the wealthy, high profile celebrities who know nothing of the reality of our experiences, yet in their ignorance feel they are being "charitable" by endorsing laws and policies that cause us harm.

The evidence is clear. The criminalization of sex work contributes to violence against sex workers by police and clients and others; it prevents sex workers from being protected by the law; and it feeds the culture of stigma and discrimination that negatively impacts all our human rights, from health to housing and more.

Amnesty International is to be congratulated for the quality of the draft policy it has prepared, which in itself is another milestone in the journey of realizing the human rights of sex workers.

A rejection of this policy would effectively be a vote for the status quo in the lives of sex workers. A status quo of impunity for those who commit crimes against us, continued exclusion from labor and legal protections, continued harmful efforts to 'rescue' us against our wishes, and continued stigma and discrimination in so many areas of our lives.

This year's International Council Meeting is an opportunity for Amnesty International to demonstrate human rights are indeed for everyone. Please ensure logic prevails over lobbying. Read the evidence. Listen to those who are directly affected by these unjust laws.

Amnesty International's highly respected global voice WILL make a difference in realizing our human rights. So please make that a *positive* difference.

Our health, our safety, our lives and our livelihoods WILL be affected by your vote.

So, please, vote Yes to the policy on decriminalization of sex work.

Best Regards,

Kay Thi Win, Coordinator
Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers