

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Dated: April 30, 1998

Today at 12 midnight, around six hundred sex workers observed May Day resolving to continue their fight till the establishment of their rightful position (right of a worker) in the society and constitute a self regulatory board to prevent exploitative practices rampant in different red light areas at College Square in Calcutta. Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee being the National Secretariat of the National Network of Sexworkers had organised the celebration.

About six hundred Sex workers from different redlight areas of Calcutta met at college square rallying down from Sonagachi and Bowbazar. The cultural wing of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, Komol Gandhar presented the inaugural song which was followed by the speech of Smt. Anima Banerjee, President of the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee. She said that sexworkers are bonded labourer of the society. The patriarchal society has designed a legal system which prevent them to raise their voice against corruption and exploitation.

DMSC held that as a prerequisite to demanding legal recognition, sex workers insist that what they do, be recognised as real work, and that they themselves be recognised as workers not as 'loose women.' Hence their slogan "sex work is work, we demand workers' rights." Members of the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee argued that recognising sex work as an occupation rather than as a moral condition would enable them to make use of strategies traditionally employed by workers in other sectors to regulate their profession and protect against exploitation, especially that involved in trafficking and in the prostitution of minor girls. In particular, sex workers are campaigning for trade union rights and for increased self-determination through the formation of a self-regulatory board.

They strongly argued that self-regulatory board can prevent the entry of minor girls as well as forceful entry of women into the profession and will provide to change profession based on their personal skill and likings.