

## International Human Rights Group Applauds Ireland for Law Targeting Buyers of Sex

### *Survivors of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Lead Ground-breaking Campaign*

**New York, 15 February, 2017-** The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) commends the Republic of Ireland for the historic passage of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill, which decriminalizes prostituted people and penalizes the purchase of sex. After years of intense efforts, the bill passed Ireland's lower house, Dáil Éireann, on 7 February and was approved in the upper house, Seanad Éireann, on 14 February, 2017.

**The new Irish law will help efforts to end demand by holding sex buyers accountable and will also ensure that prostituted individuals and survivors can access comprehensive support services. In addition, it strengthens national laws against sexual grooming, child pornography and sexual harassment in the Republic of Ireland.**

**Rachel Moran**, founder and executive director of **SPACE** International (Survivors of Prostitution-Abuse Calling for Enlightenment), was a key Irish abolitionist activist who advocated for the law as part of the **Turn Off the Red Light** campaign, a coalition of direct service providers, survivor-led groups, women's rights organizations, labour unions, medical providers and other groups in Ireland.

*"It's been six years almost to the day since I first spoke publicly in Dublin about the harm and damage of prostitution and the need for our government to do something about it," said Moran, also the author of 'Paid For: My Journey Through Prostitution.'* *"With great relief, our government has formally responded to the Turn Off the Red Light campaign and voted overwhelmingly to criminalize the demand for paid sexual access to human beings. Ireland is now a hostile territory for pimps and traffickers, and a place where men can no longer legally use women's desperation to buy their way inside our bodies. This is a historic day that sends a message of hope."*

The Republic of Ireland follows the example of Sweden, the first country to legally recognise prostitution as a form of violence and discrimination against women in 1999. Norway, Iceland, Canada (with exceptions), Northern Ireland and, most recently, France have also enacted **demand-focused, abolitionist laws** to combat the multi-billion dollar sex trade and its economic engine, sex trafficking. This legal framework is known as the Swedish or Nordic model.

In enacting the new law, the Irish government upholds its international obligations under the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (**Palermo Protocol**). Respectively, these international conventions call on state parties to enact national legislation and policies that address the exploitation of prostitution of others and the demand that fosters the sex trade and sex trafficking, among other human rights violations.

*"Passage of the Irish law is a testament to the survivors of prostitution and sex trafficking who tell us with immense courage about the unspeakable horrors they've endured at the hands of sex buyers, traffickers and pimps,"* said Taina Bien-Aimé, executive director of CATW. *"This victory belongs to them. Millions, mostly women and girls, continue to be exploited in the sex trade worldwide with unacceptable impunity, but today we applaud Ireland for honouring the tireless campaigners and for showcasing its vision of human rights and equality for all."*

**The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW)** is one of the oldest non-governmental organizations working to end human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) of women and girls worldwide. CATW engages in advocacy, education and prevention programs, and services for victims of trafficking and CSE in Asia-Pacific, Africa, Europe and the Americas.