



20 November 2010

#### CALL TO ACTION:

#### **UGANDA: Government should break the chains of injustices against sexual minorities and lift decision to ban Sex Workers Human Rights workshop.**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 the State Minister for Ethics and Integrity Hon Nsaba Buturo called off a conference organized by Akina Mama wa Afrika a Pan African Women's Non Governmental Organisation based in Kampala, Uganda. He did so by sending a strong worded letter to the Hotel General Manager giving "*directives not to host a Prostitutes Conference run by Akina Mama wa Afrika and if they do so, will be abetting illegality in Uganda*". It should be noted that Akina Mama sent a letter to the Minister informing him about the details of the conference. He never responded to it, but instead, sent a threatening letter to the hotel management with the objective to suspend the meeting.

The Minister's actions are in open contradiction to the constitution of Uganda which guarantees the Freedom of Assembly, Speech and non discrimination said Kasha Jacqueline Director of Freedom and Roam Uganda. Commercial sex workers constitute a minority group that has the right to assemble, share ideas and forge ways on how to protect themselves against violence, abuse and HIV/AIDS as well as empower themselves, as any other Ugandan citizen.

Stopping this conference repeats a known pattern, as in 2008 the same Minister also cancelled a scheduled conference organized by the same group and host organization. While many other groups can meet freely in Uganda without being stopped or harassed, commercial sex workers, who experience high levels of vulnerability, inequality and discrimination can not exercise their right to freedom of assembly and speech" "*This is an injustice, a violation of their political and civil rights as well as of the right to work of these young women*" lamented FARUG Communications Manager.

The Ugandan Ministry of Health, as it is well known, has acknowledged that Commercial Sex Workers are among Most At Risk Populations (MARPs) and has included them as main partners of the National HIV/AIDS program, which is guided among others by the UNGASS guidelines. Therefore the actions performed by Mr Buturo are at odds with the national policy guidelines and will evidently undermine the investments made by the Ministry of Health to prevent and treat groups and persons affected by HIV/AIDS.

It should also be noted that, since 2003, Uganda has received eight grants from the Global Fund

to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. As its known worldwide the Global Funds guidelines are also very clear to state that the various populations affected by HIV/AIDS should be part of the efforts to prevent and treat the pandemic and, not as it is happening in Uganda, be systematically brutalized by criminalization. As it has been analyzed by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, Mr. Anand Grover in his report to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2010: *“Criminalization represents a barrier to participation and collective action, through the suppression of activities of civil society and individual advocates. The participation of sex workers in interventions has been shown to have significant benefits. Organizations representing sex workers took an early lead in attempting to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS, through the promotion of condom use, the development of AIDS education programs and inclusive research studies”*

Stopping the conference being organized by Akina Mama wa Afrika openly contradicts these recommendations and guidelines to fight against HIV/AIDS in Uganda.

We call on the Minister and Government of Uganda to apologies for the trouble his intervention has caused and reverse his absurd decision.

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“BREAK THE CHAINS”