Stockholm +20: Looking Back, Moving Forward

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Introduction:

The Government of Canada’s Child and Youth section website states that “the commercial sexual exploitation of children is a heinous form of child abuse which takes many forms, including child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking in children. Canada is committed to ending the commercial sexual exploitation of children.”\(^1\) As part of its efforts to achieve this end, Canada has been involved in a number of initiatives including assisting in drafting the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography\(^2\) that requires nations that signed on to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to criminalize these activities in national laws. It has also been centrally involved in global efforts to bring attention to the issue of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Specifically, this paper focuses on Canada’s involvement in the First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children convened in Stockholm, Sweden in 1996. In the twenty years that have transpired since the Congress, Canadian legal, law enforcement, policy, advocacy, and research landscapes, among others with regard to CSEC, have changed. This paper briefly discusses the Stockholm Congress with specific attention to the work by the Honourable Landon Pearson. In the spring, 2016, Landon Pearson convened at Carleton University a roundtable of stakeholders across sectors at an event entitled Stockholm +20 to take stock of progress, pitfalls, and remaining challenges on the trajectory to end the sexual exploitation of children. This paper details some of the discussion at Stockholm +20 and reflects on progress made in view of the Declaration and Agenda for Action adopted by all countries present at the Stockholm Congress including Canada. The paper ends by emphasizing child and youth participation as key to addressing CSEC in a substantive way.

Background: Three World Congresses

Three World Congresses addressing CSEC have been convened since 1996 with each meeting highlighting unique challenges in legal, enforcement, policy, advocacy, research and practical environments.
The First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children that took place in Stockholm, Sweden in August 1996 was a collaborative effort between ECPAT, UNICEF, the NGO Committee for the Rights of the Child, and the Swedish government. Over 1,300 delegates from approximately 125 countries attended the Stockholm Congress including government officials, NGOs, civil society members, and 20 youth-affiliated organizations. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifically article 34, framed the discussions at the Congress. Article 34 states that

State Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent: a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

The Stockholm Agenda for Action (A4A) and Declaration resulting from the Stockholm Congress identified seven areas for action: child participation, prevention, protection, recovery/integration, information collection and dissemination, international cooperation, and follow-up. The Declaration was unanimously approved.

The Second World Congress took place in Yokohama, Japan in December 2001 with over 3,000 delegates, including 90 youth in attendance. The interest in child and youth participation that began at the Stockholm Congress, thanks to the efforts of Landon Pearson who insisted that experiential youth be given an opportunity to speak, played an even greater role in this second meeting with many more young people in attendance. Apart from an informed position from which to speak about their own experiences of sexual exploitation, youth collaborated to organize and launch the global anti-CSEC network. The Yokohama Global Commitment, which emerged from this gathering, built on the 1996 Stockholm Declaration and includes pledges from an additional 34 states. In the words of a youth delegate from the Yokohama World Congress 2001:

“When shall we have a world in which life is based on a sense of caring, sharing, true love and the protection of all societies and individuals from all forms of abuse, discrimination and exploitation—a world free from the commercial sexual exploitation of children?”

In November 2005, the Third World Congress against the sexual exploitation of children took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This third iteration brought together over 4000 delegates, including 300 children and youth from 94 countries. Whereas the second Congress focused attention on youth participation and technology, the Rio Congress shifted to examining the issue
of child abuse occurring within families and communities. The term “commercial” was removed from the title of the Congress given its interest in blurring the distinction between private and public spheres in considering sexual exploitation issues. Importantly, the Rio World Congress highlighted the role of the private sector in identifying and participating in ways to bring an end to child sexual exploitation. The Rio de Janeiro Pact to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (The Rio Pact) resulted from this Congress.\(^9\) Similar to the culminating documents from the First and Second World Congresses, The Rio Pact cited a number of recommendations including encouraging a coordination of efforts among stakeholders, strengthening domestic and international laws and their enforcement with regard to child exploitation, focusing on education and CSEC, and devising better ways to gather data and to identify vulnerable children. New initiatives arose at this Congress including the idea for ombudsmen for children and youth as well as country offices of child protection. These important outcomes currently figure prominently in advocacy efforts in Canada to establish a Federal Children’s Commissioner. As one young delegate from the Rio Congress noted:

“The work we have begun here must not end here today when the congress rooms become empty and the heated discussions here in Rio de Janeiro become silent. We must not allow the discussion of children’s rights, particularly in the matter of sexual exploitation, to ever go silent again but we must evoke calls of change throughout the world like never done before.”\(^{10}\)

Senator Landon Pearson and Canada’s Participation Against CSEC: the 1996 Stockholm World Congress and Post Congress Youth Summit

As a member of the Canadian delegation to the Stockholm World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in 1996 along with the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senator Landon Pearson, known as Canada’s
“Children’s Senator”, insisted on the importance of hearing the voices and perspectives of young people who have experienced CSEC. She stressed that they should have opportunities to participate in strategizing and finding solutions to ending child sexual exploitation. Although few young people with experiential knowledge of CSEC participated in the Stockholm Congress, Cherry Kingsley who was a youth member of the Canadian delegation, made a lasting and important contribution to the Congress. She had been invited to participate in the Human Values panel discussion in part because of her experience as a sexual exploitation survivor and her involvement in the sex trade since the age of 14. Cherry challenged the panel participants on matters concerning adult-centric views of children and childhood, and tokenistic understandings of children’s participation. Cherry urged adult delegates to be accountable to children including changing the language used to address those who have been sexually exploited.

The Congress’ focus on commercial child sexual exploitation and the goals to identify child prostitution as child sexual abuse and to criminalize those who procure children for sex, among other foci, garnered substantial media and global attention. The Congress advanced these complex issues and raised awareness of the social character of the inequalities that make children vulnerable to this type of exploitation. One of Senator Pearson’s particular contributions was to suggest that young people develop their own Declaration and Agenda for Action to parallel the one prepared by adult Congress delegates. She insisted that young people who have experienced sexual exploitation and who had experience in the sex trade should be given an opportunity to have their voices heard and considered by those developing strategies to end CSEC.

Following the First World Congress, Minister Axworthy asked Landon Pearson to follow up on the recommendations made at the Stockholm Congress. Senator Pearson suggested that she and Cherry Kingsley build on the synergy that began in Stockholm by focusing on the idea of further enabling experiential youth to have their voices and perspectives heard on the matter of ending sexual exploitation. They designed Out from the Shadows, a project featuring youth CSEC survivors. The project involved a nine-month consultation, international networking, and culminated in an International Youth Summit of sexually exploited youth with their own outcome report. This international five-day Youth Summit held in March 1998 in Victoria, British Columbia, involved consultations with young people, both boys and girls, in or from the sex trade in cities across Canada as well as in the Americas and the Caribbean. In all, two experiential youth and one support person in several delegations from the Americas and the Caribbean (Brazil, Honduras, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Dominican Republic), six American experiential youth (New York, Los Angeles, Seattle), twenty experiential youth from across
Canada and twenty Canadian organizers participated in the Summit. Importantly, special consideration was given to young people in the sex trade from First Nations communities who are disproportionately involved in commercial sexual exploitation and particularly vulnerable due to a number of intersecting inequalities.

The OFTS Youth Summit culminated with the release of a *Youth Declaration and Agenda for Action*.\(^{13}\) This Declaration and Agenda were presented to policy makers, government officials, NGOs and other stakeholders during the final two days of the Youth Summit. The public was also invited for input in an effort to develop community-based strategies for ending the sexual exploitation of children.

In the Declaration Cherry Kingsley pursued the change in language to address sexually exploited children that she had articulated at the Stockholm Congress two years earlier. Thanks to her efforts to initiate this discussion, the term ‘juvenile prostitute’ was replaced with the phrase ‘children exploited in the sex trade,’ which is now commonly used in the international lexicon. Two additional initiatives arose from the OFTS Youth Summit: first, the creation of the Sexually Exploited Youth Speak Out network comprising youth who had attended the Summit and second, a national five-month long consultation in 2000 of 150 Aboriginal at-risk youth who had experienced sexual exploitation and the sex trade. The report called *Sacred Lives: Aboriginal Children and Youth Speak Out About Sexual Exploitation* resulting from this consultation includes recommendations in five areas: prevention, crisis intervention and harm reduction, exiting and healing, public attitudes, and youth participation.\(^{14}\)
Stockholm +20

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Stockholm First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Landon Pearson convened an event at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada on May 26, 2016. The design and intent of the event, apart from marking this anniversary, was to look back at the recommendations that had been made at the Stockholm Congress and to report on progress, changes and remaining challenges for Canada as well as to propose ways to continue to productively move forward on this issue.

Invited to participate at the roundtable discussion were members of organizations including Justice Canada, Global Affairs Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada as well as non-governmental organizations including PLAN Canada and the Red Cross. A law enforcement representative from the RCMP as well as academic representatives were invited to speak. Three broad themes organized the discussion: prevention, youth participation, and future directions. Each participant gave a brief update on their assessment of changes over the past 20 years in their respective areas regarding CSEC.

Speaking on changes in the legislative framework for addressing CSEC in Canada, Natalie Levman from Justice Canada offered a synopsis of legislative developments since Stockholm that account for Canada’s current strong legislative environment regarding CSEC with a particular focus on trafficking legislation. One significant change noted has been the introduction of new legal measures that allow Canadian citizens and permanent residents to be prosecuted for engaging in commercial sexual activities with children while abroad. Ms. Levman noted that this development is in line with the 1996 Stockholm World Congress commitment to pressure governments to adopt laws permitting countries to prosecute nationals who engage in sexual activity with children under 18 years of age while outside their home nation. She discussed the comprehensive trafficking laws that had come into existence since the Stockholm Congress. Introduced in Canada in 2005, anyone involved in human trafficking, defined as someone who “recruits, transports, transfers, receives, holds, conceals or harbours a person, or exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation” is guilty of an indictable offence under Canada’s Criminal Code Section 279.01. Ms. Levman noted that it is unique because the amendment respects the perspective of the victim and not the perpetrator. She went on to discuss that in June 2012, amendments passed into law made human trafficking outside of Canada by
citizens or permanent residents of Canada a criminal offence *in* Canada. This 2012 amendment brought a new interpretive analysis to help courts understand trafficking more fully. A further development is that the definition of exploitation in the Criminal Code (section 279.04), criticized for narrowly focusing on victimization, has been broadened to assist courts in understanding incidents of exploitation.

Other amendments mentioned include Bill C-15, the 2001 Bill that makes Internet luring an offence; Bill C-2, the 2004 amendment to Canada’s Criminal Code that provides for child witnesses to testify against those who have exploited them. The Bill expands the scope of some existing offences and narrows the availability of defenses while increasing penalties for those convicted of such a crime. It also includes procedural reforms that facilitate testimony by young persons and broadens the courts’ ability to accommodate vulnerable witnesses, including children, in criminal justice proceedings. Finally, in 2011, Bill C-22, *An Act Respecting the Mandatory Reporting of Internet Child Pornography by Persons Who Provide an Internet Service*, came into force. It obligates Internet providers by law to report any instances of child pornography on the Internet. Ms. Levman noted that there has been much progress in the legislative environment in Canada and overall the interplay between international and national laws has moved forward in a productive manner.

In a discussion of the challenges to bringing child participation into child protection contexts, Professor Virginia Caputo focused on the need for conceptual clarity in practice that allows children to be viewed as fully human beings and therefore full participants in society. Caputo argued that ‘innocence’ as a framework offers a double-edged sword to analyses of CSEC. Specifically, she asked how can children be both protected and empowered in work addressing CSEC. The audience viewed the video “Sweetie” as an entry point to discuss the ways technology further complicates issues pertaining to CSEC. “Sweetie” is a computer generated robot imaged as a little girl designed to entrap and track down online perpetrators.

Roberta Sinclair, from the Canadian Police Centre for Missing and Exploited Children/Behavioural Sciences Branch of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, elaborated on how the digital world and online access have exacerbated the issue of child sexual exploitation and the legislation on child exploitation. She noted the ways predators are using the Internet, masking their identity and befriending children and young people, and luring, harassing, and stalking children, placing them at risk of harm and sexual exploitation. In her comments, she stressed the strong legislative framework that is present in Canada and its importance in her work to combat sexual exploitation in digital environments. As well, she pointed out that the contexts
in which CSEC occurs have changed over the past 20 years because children are living in hyper-sexualized environments that are made further accessible through increasingly sophisticated technology. She concluded her remarks by stressing the importance of understanding these contexts in which children and young people find themselves by soliciting their own views and perspectives. Ms. Sinclair noted the importance of engaging in dialogue with children rather than telling them what to do and assuming adults understand how this impacts children.

The panelists from governmental departments discussed robust developments in national and international programming and policies that address CSEC in terms of child protection. Kathleen Flynn-Dapaah, a representative from Global Affairs Canada,\textsuperscript{18} and Shannon Hurley from the Public Health Agency of Canada,\textsuperscript{19} noted a number of initiatives that their offices have launched to combat sexual exploitation. Ms. Flynn-Dapaah spoke about Canada’s role in supporting a law against trafficking in Cambodia and noted that it is important for Canada to take action now given the 2030 sustainable development agenda.\textsuperscript{20} Ms. Hurley noted the cyclical aspects of violence in children’s lives indicating that her department sees sexual violence as a health issue where health has a role in prevention.\textsuperscript{21} One of the key points they both raised is how important it is in their work to find ways to involve children meaningfully in ending sexual exploitation.

From the NGO sector, PLAN Canada’s representative Kate Waller discussed child protection programs using a multi-pronged approach to address the multi-layered complexity involved in CSEC issues.\textsuperscript{22} She described one of PLAN’s programs with a dual focus on child protection and education in Kenya that has brought about a reduction in gender-based violence by linking formal and community practices.

The final speaker, Lucy Vorobej, from the University of Waterloo, introduced her web-based project that accounts for the importance of history in understanding the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada.\textsuperscript{23} The site is aimed at high school students who wish to learn about CSEC and the disproportionately high numbers of First Nations young people involved. The key message of the presentation was that “history matters” in fully understanding the circumstances of sexual exploitation of children in contemporary contexts.

The event concluded with a discussion of what has emerged as the key development over the past twenty years, namely, the importance of child and youth participation in fully addressing the issue of sexual exploitation. This discussion began at the first World Congress and has become increasingly central to those working to end CSEC in academic, legislative, law enforcement, programming, policy and advocacy in Canada. Landon Pearson made it a point to
end the roundtable discussion with the words of young people themselves. The Declaration from “Out of the Shadows” was read aloud and the audience viewed a video showing a young woman reading her poem “A Touch of Sexual Assault” to conclude the event.²⁴

In her closing remarks, Landon Pearson noted the progress that had been made on implementing some of the recommendations of the Stockholm Congress in legislative, law enforcement, policy, academic, and programmatic efforts. In particular, she echoed that the legislative framework in Canada for addressing child sexual exploitation had been significantly strengthened since 1996 with many of the loopholes related to CSEC now closed. She also noted two new developments over this twenty-year period. First, the importance of, and concern with, the impact of technology which she noted was, understandably, relatively absent from the 1996 Congress but which now has profound implications for the way forward to address CSEC. Second, Landon Pearson noted the prominent role that the private sector is increasingly playing in addressing the issue.²⁵ She closed by stressing, again, the importance of enabling, hearing and listening to the voices and perspectives of children and young people who have experienced sexual exploitation and who have been in the sex trade. This focus on child and youth participation and engagement drives all of the work of the Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children’s Rights, including its annual youth-led and youth-driven conference called Shaking the Movers.²⁶ The workshop, now in its 10th year, provides an opportunity for children and young people to discuss an issue of concern in their lives as it relates to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2015, Shaking the Movers youth participants focused on the theme of child sexual exploitation in an unforgettable way demonstrating once again that youth voices, perspectives and engagement are vital to shaping constructive ways forward to ending the sexual exploitation of children.

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1 For more information, see: http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/aid-aide/exploitation.aspx?lang=eng
2 Available at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPSCCRC.aspx
3 First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. See: http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/keyword/world-congress-against-commercial-sexual-exploitation-children
5 Stockholm Agenda for Action and Declaration available on the Unicef.org website: www.unicef.org/.../The%20Stockholm%20Declaration%20and%20Agenda%20for%2
6 Yokohama Global Commitment. Available at: http://www.unicef.org/events/yokohama/outcome.html
Youth quote from Rio Congress. Document available in the Landon Pearson Resource Centre, Carleton University, A735 Loeb, Ottawa, Canada.
For more on Landon Pearson see: www.landonpearson.ca
Out From the Shadows final report. Available at: http://03559de.netsolhost.com/vicreport-e.htm
Youth Declaration and Agenda for Action. Appendix 1. Available at: http://03559de.netsolhost.com/vicreport-e.htm
‘Sweetie’ video from Terre des Hommes. Available at: https://vimeo.com/86895084
PLAN Canada. More information available at: www.plancanada.ca
Lucy Vorobej’s website available at: http://www.projectnewsworthy.com/
Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xcCWAQnBuk
Examples include ECPAT’s education and advocacy efforts with the travel and tourism industry to sign a Code of Conduct for hotels to train their staff around the world on CSEC issues, Air Canada’s public service announcements targeting awareness of CSEC for passengers on flights, and campaigns such as The Body Shop’s STOP Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People, which has raised over 3 million dollars since 2010.
For more on Shaking the Movers, see www.landonpearson.ca