



EQUALITY NOW

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Ms Alexis Coles-Barrasso
CEO
Thomas Cook Retail Ltd
The Thomas Cook Business Park
Coningsby Road
Peterborough PE3 8SB

22 November 2005

Dear Ms Coles-Barrasso

I am writing on behalf of Equality Now, an international women's rights organisation that works for the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and girls around the world. Issues of concern to Equality Now include all forms of violence and discrimination against women, including the commercial sexual exploitation of women.

We are deeply concerned about the reported launch by Thomas Cook of family tours to the Red Light district of Amsterdam. The trafficking of women to the Netherlands for the purposes of prostitution is a lucrative business for the criminal underworld. It is estimated that over 80% of women in prostitution in Amsterdam are trafficked into prostitution. Amsterdam police were reported last month as saying that prostitution of trafficked women is a modern form of slavery and that legalisation of prostitution in the Netherlands has hampered police efforts to confront the horrors characteristic of the sex trade. Amsterdam's mayor also admitted that abuse continues and the law has not achieved its aim to make prostitution safe. Women are driven into prostitution through economic, social and cultural inequalities. The commercial sale of sex objectifies women and constitutes an abuse perpetuating this gender inequality. Women in prostitution should not be further objectified, exploited and abused as part of anyone's entertainment package.

We urge Thomas Cook to cancel this tour immediately and hope that the company will in the future consider more carefully the potential human rights impact of its actions before designing its tour offers.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Hunt
Director

WORKING FOR THE CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD

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