

TAKING STOCK

Implementation of the recommendations from the Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism and the Call for Action from the International Summit on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism



The sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism is defined as “acts of sexual exploitation of children, which are embedded within the context of travel, tourism or both.”¹ The [Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism](#) (hereinafter Global Study) and the [Call for Action](#) resulting from the first [International Summit on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism](#) in 2018, significantly raised awareness of sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism and produced meaningful actions that contributed to protecting children.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic derailed much of the momentum and progress regarding child protection in the travel and tourism context. Indeed, the

socio-economic vulnerability of children, including in the countries that have traditionally largely depended on income from tourism, dramatically increased as a result of the pandemic but also due to political instabilities, migration (including informal), natural disasters, wars and emergencies.

Despite these recent and ongoing challenges, there is now more attention on the sexual exploitation of children, and steps have been made towards improved laws, policies, and their enforcement, as well as increased travel and tourism industry engagement in cooperation with non-governmental organisations generating evidence and mobilising action.

Looking at the future ahead, there is more scope for concerted action in the post-pandemic period to drive holistic sustainability in travel and tourism that prioritises children’s right to live free from sexual exploitation and all forms of violence. The recommendations of the Global Study and the Call for Action provided a comprehensive guidance that remains valid for strengthening a child-rights-centred, multi-stakeholder action framework for the effective and sustainable protection of children in travel and tourism including in the increasingly interlinked online context.

¹ ECPAT International. (2016, May). Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism 2016. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

CONTEXT

Over the last decades, people have become more mobile, with increasing access to travel. Before the pandemic, the number of international travellers had been increasing and was expected to reach 1.8 billion by 2030.² According to the World Tourism Barometer, released in November 2022 by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, in 2022 international tourism reached 63% of pre-pandemics levels, signalling a rapid and sustained recovery of international travel.³ In addition, during the pandemic and as the restrictions eased, destinations around the world have been focusing on growing domestic tourism.⁴ Trends that have been shaping the recovering travel and tourism ecosystem include community tourism, voluntourism,⁵ digitalisation of travel services through seamless travel solutions or combining work with leisure experience. These new travel solutions can however also generate avenues for offenders to exploit children.

Indeed, the sexual exploitation of children in the context of international and domestic travel and tourism has continued to thrive globally, with offenders misusing the infrastructure and services of the industry, increasingly combined with online technologies, to commit their crimes. Offenders are targeting children using digital technologies, seeking online and in-person contact with children in their own countries and abroad. While a rebound in travel and tourism is currently taking place, with the reopening of the world economy and global travel, the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism has not stopped with the closure of borders – it continued both online and in-person. Though international travelling offenders continue to be amongst those committing sexual exploitation in this context, this is very much a domestic and intra-regional crime.

Key challenges, trends and priority actions related to sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism are further outlined, in ECPAT's [Summary Paper](#) on the topic.

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Published at the end of 2016, the Global Study has shed light on the crime of sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism and set out clear recommendations for concrete action. In the past years, ECPAT International has been actively working with relevant entities and individuals to implement these recommendations and generate opportunities for collective action. Below is a summary of the progress and challenges in the implementation of the recommendations from the Global Study, clustered under the four target groups of changemakers identified in the Global Study as outlined below.

1. International and Regional and Intergovernmental Bodies

Regional and international bodies must position the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism on their political agendas, to ensure that international and regional commitments can be met.

² United Nations (2017, December). World could see 1.8 billion tourists by 2030 – UN agency.

³ UNWTO (2023, January). UNWTO World Tourism Barometer and Statistical Annex.

⁴ OECD. (2020, December). Rebuilding tourism for the future: COVID-19 policy responses and recovery.

⁵ Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material. (2023, February). Call for input: Addressing the exploitation and sexual abuse of children in the context of travel and tourism; a closer look at the phenomena of voluntourism.

International Summit on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism

International and regional intergovernmental bodies have increasingly recognised the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism in their agendas, as demonstrated by the International Summit on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism⁶ (Bogotá, Colombia - June 2018) which brought together world leaders, government, international and regional multilateral organisations, private sector, law enforcement agencies, child rights experts, non-governmental organisations and youth representatives to reiterate the need to address a broad spectrum of exploitation of children. Participants from the Summit issued a Declaration and Call for Action detailing specific actions needed to tackle the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. These include proactive, comprehensive, context-specific and sustainable prevention as well as strong and effective legal frameworks ensuring protection of children and prosecution of offenders. Increasing cooperation between law enforcement and justice system is further detailed as a much-needed priority for successful cross-border investigations. Further, access to child and gender sensitive justice, protection, comprehensive care, and full recovery should be provided to child victims of sexual exploitation.

Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics

In line with the first recommendation of the Global Study, the Code of Ethics for Tourism of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, which set a voluntary frame of reference for responsible and sustainable tourism development, was converted into the [Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics](#). The Framework Convention covers a broad range of ethical aspects related to tourism, including its impact on the environment, cultural heritage and societies.⁷ The Framework Convention, specifically recognises sexual exploitation of children as being **“in conflict with the fundamental aims of tourism and is the negation of tourism”**⁸ and invites States Parties to cooperate to combat this issue, also through criminalisation of offenders both in the country of nationality as well as the country of commission of the crime. The Framework Convention further calls upon the media to never promote sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.⁹

Unlike the Code of Ethics for Tourism, ratification of/accession to the Convention, legally binds States to implement its principles and measures. As of March 2023, four States – Albania, Lebanon, Nigeria and Seychelles – have acceded to the Framework Convention. Whilst, Indonesia, the first signatory in 2020, is pending ratification.¹⁰ The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, Mama Fatima Singhateh, in occasion of the World Tourism Day 2022, stated that **“rethinking tourism must be a priority to ensure all children are protected from forced labour, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation”** and urged all States to accede to the Framework Convention and harmonise national legislations to tackle the exploitation of children and to promote responsible and ethical tourism.¹¹ The Special Rapporteur’s request remains a high priority, as the Framework Convention will not enter into force until ratified/acceded by 10 States. The Special Rapporteur further reiterated the importance of addressing the topic of sexual exploitation in the context and travel and tourism, with a focus on voluntourism, by dedicating to this topic her next thematic report to be presented to the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly.¹²

⁶ ECPAT International. (2018, June). Declaration and Call for Action for the Protection of Children in Travel and Tourism. Bogota: The International Summit on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism.

⁷ UNWTO. Ethics Convention.

⁸ UNWTO. (2020). Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics. Madrid: UNWTO. Article 5.3.

⁹ UNWTO. (2020). Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics. Madrid: UNWTO. Article 9.6.

¹⁰ UNWTO. The Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics and its Optional Protocol.

¹¹ OHCHR. (2022, September). Tourism rethink needed to protect children vulnerable to exploitation: UN expert.

¹² Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material. (2023, February). Call for input: Addressing the exploitation and sexual abuse of children in the context of travel and tourism; a closer look at the phenomena of voluntourism.

World Tourism Days

Since 1980, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation has celebrated World Tourism Day on the 27th of September. In 2022, the chosen theme of “Rethinking Tourism – From Crisis to Transformation” reflected on how the unprecedented crisis that hit the tourism sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic also created a space to foster positive changes. Considering the scope of the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics, such transformation should also focus on ending the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. Civil society organisations such as [ECPAT International](#), the [Down to Zero Alliance](#) and [Tourism Watch](#), echoed this sentiment, and have called for child protection measures to be translated into concrete action.

This includes for the United Nations World Tourism Organisation to prioritise prevention of the sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism with its online elements in its guidelines for destinations; to ensure visibility of child protection on its website and agenda, including through establishing an internal mechanism to monitor progress by the governments and the travel and tourism sector on child protection measures, as well as to urge states to close legal and policy gaps to stop children falling victims to sexual exploitation in the context of travel and tourism, considering also the increasing interconnections with the digital environment.

Regional entities

Positively, the sexual exploitation of children in the travel and tourism context has been increasingly recognised by regional human rights mechanisms and acknowledged by regional entities. Between 2019-2022 the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), the Regional Action Group of the Americas for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism (GARA) and the South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC), recognised and endorsed the 24-point [Legal Checklist: Key Legal Interventions to Protect Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism](#). The Legal Checklist was developed by ECPAT International in cooperation with the Global Study partners as a tool to step-up action to harmonise and improve national, regulations and policy frameworks on sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism. Recognising the need for legislation – and overall efforts – on ending the sexual exploitation of children not to be seen in silos, the legal checklist also guides governments to important substantive and procedural aspects beyond the travel and tourism context, for example, by looking at the criminalisation of the online grooming of children for sexual purposes.

2. National Governments

National governments have a direct responsibility to protect children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, whether they are countries of demand, supply or victimisation.

Governments’ attitudes towards sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism

There are some positive examples of governments’ action against the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism, such as from Latin American countries that have been developing and enforcing child protection standards for the travel and tourism industry as outlined in the [overview on national codes in the Americas](#) and [country legal analysis](#) based on the abovementioned Legal Checklist. However, the application and enforcement of law and policies in practice remains a challenge in this and in other regions. This is particularly exacerbated by unstable political environments, where children’s rights to live free from all forms of violence and exploitation are not at the centre of

governments interventions.¹³ Additionally, some governments are still in denial, fearing stigma, instead of taking preventive measures as part of national responsible and sustainable travel and tourism strategies to increase the resilience of destinations from sexual exploitation of children, and put children at the heart of their interventions.

National legislation and policies

One of the main recommendations for national governments identified by the Global Study, was to ensure that national legal frameworks and policies address the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism adequately. Analysis of national legislations' compliance with the Legal Checklist, conducted by ECPAT International between 2019-2022, show that progress in improving and effectively enforcing legal and policy frameworks has been slow as outlined in the [ECPAT regional overviews](#), often lacking effective implementation mechanisms to ensure application and enforcement of child protection frameworks.

Indeed, out of 44 countries in four regions (Southeast Asia, South Asia, Latin America and Africa), only:

- ▶ Nine countries establish obligatory **child protection standards** for the tourism industry¹⁴
- ▶ Eight countries **criminalise the grooming** of children for sexual purposes¹⁵
- ▶ Two countries establish legislation requiring a **criminal background check** for every person applying for work with or for children¹⁶

International Cooperation

International cooperation channels need to be strengthened to address online and in-person sexual exploitation of children with transnational components. This includes exchange and cooperation among **law enforcement**, civil society organisations and the private sector between different countries and within communities. Law enforcement agencies must be part of the discussion process to proactively prevent all forms of sexual exploitation of children including in the context of travel and tourism and online. Legislation needs to enable cross-border responses to protect children and avoid impunity for offenders. Therefore, states need to enact comprehensive extraterritorial legislation and extradition mechanisms. Alongside, measures must be adopted to remove practical and procedural obstacles that affect the applicability of these provisions.

Extraterritorial jurisdiction is important as it reduces impunity by allowing the prosecution of crimes that offenders may have avoided punishment for because of weaknesses or loopholes in the legal system in the country where the crime was committed.¹⁷ Once jurisdiction over a case is established, extradition takes place where authorities work together due to the transnational nature of the crime which could request the offender's enforced return to face prosecution and/or punishment. Only 14 of the 44 countries analysed by ECPAT have appropriate extraterritorial provisions for sexual exploitation of children crimes that provide for both active and passive extraterritoriality for all offences of sexual exploitation of children.¹⁸ There are several countries which do not consider offences of sexual

¹³ Information provided by ECPAT member organisations in a framework of a dedicated workshop held online on 22nd February 2023.

¹⁴ The countries include: Bhutan, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, Ecuador, Gambia, The Philippines

¹⁵ The countries include: Madagascar, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, Malaysia, The Philippines

¹⁶ The countries include: Chile, Colombia

¹⁷ ECPAT International. Extraterritorial Jurisdiction and Extradition Legislation as Tools to Fight the Sexual Exploitation of Children. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

¹⁸ These countries include: Cambodia, Myanmar, Singapore, Vietnam, Ivory Coast, Uganda, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru.

exploitation of children as extraditable and require the principle of double criminality to proceed with extraterritorial jurisdiction or extradition for such crimes. Eight out of the 44 analysed countries include in extradition treaties the sexual exploitation of children as extraditable offences and apply when appropriate the rules of Article 5 of the Optional Protocol to the Conventions on the Rights of the Child on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, regardless of the nationality of the (alleged) offender.¹⁹ The number of countries that do not require the principle of double criminality for proceeding with extraterritorial jurisdiction or extradition for sexual offences against children are only seven out of the 44 analysed.²⁰ According to the double criminality requirement, the offence must be prohibited both in the offender's country of origin and in the country where the offence was committed.

International cooperation also includes the management and exchange of information on travelling sex offenders. While some legislation is in place and international agreements have been made, gaps in legal frameworks and their enforcement make it possible for offenders to exploit victims. For example, despite the Global Study's recommendation to enhance use of Interpol-issued Green Notices - meant to provide warnings about a travelling person's criminal activities - discrepancies in its use persist. Indeed, not all countries have legal frameworks that allow them to issue notices, while other countries do not respond proactively, and potentially do not have the capacity, to prevent the sexual exploitation of children after receiving notices.²¹

Reporting mechanisms

As indicated in the Global Study and in the Declaration and Call for Action from the Summit, governments should provide adequate resources for reporting mechanisms and ensure their use among their citizens. Reporting mechanisms have been developed in an increasing number of countries, with 35 out of the 44 countries analysed by ECPAT having established a national reporting mechanism (e.g., hotlines) coordinating access to services.²²

However, despite the existence of such mechanisms, recent evidence suggests that they are not used by children for several reasons. The [Disrupting Harm project](#) demonstrated how most cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse are not reported formally. Indeed, out of the 1,059 children who had been subjected to online sexual exploitation and abuse, only 2.9% had contacted the police and 3% had contacted a helpline.²³ Children who did not disclose at all (to police or anyone else informally) said that they did not disclose nor report because they did not know where to go or whom to tell. Frontline workers surveyed as part of Disrupting Harm identified that poor public awareness of the formal reporting channels was commonly a barrier.²⁴

Similarly, according to findings from the [Survivors' Perspectives](#) study, a multi-country research study conducted by WeProtect Global Alliance and ECPAT International between 2020-2021, young survivors of online child sexual exploitation and abuse indicated that they had very little awareness of formal reporting mechanisms.

¹⁹ The countries include: Gambia, Madagascar, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana and Peru.

²⁰ The countries include: Uganda, Myanmar, El Salvador, Guatemala, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal

²¹ Bureau Beke. (2022, February). An explorative study of the instruments in relation to (convicted) sex offenders of transnational child sexual abuse.

²² All countries except for DR, Guatemala, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nepal, Myanmar, Singapore

²³ ECPAT International & UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti (2022). Children's Disclosures of Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Disrupting Harm Data Insight 2. Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

²⁴ ECPAT International (2022). Access to Justice and Legal Remedies for Children Subjected to Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Disrupting Harm Data Insight 3. Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

With regards to reporting, the Global Study further recommended national governments to make reporting of suspected sexual exploitation of children obligatory for professions that have likelihood to have contact with children who might disclose. Mandatory reporting has been established in 23 out of 44 countries analysed by ECPAT, identifying the need for other countries to address the Global Study's recommendation.²⁵

Finally, awareness-raising campaigns on reporting have been initiated by a number of countries.²⁶ For example, in Sweden the Government initiated in collaboration with non-governmental organisations the campaign [Resekurage](#) (travel courage), while the Ministry of Security and Justice of the Netherlands launched the 'Don't Look Away' campaign to raise awareness among the public, workers in the travel industry as well as generate reports with sufficient leads to investigate cases.²⁷ However, several obstacles need to be overtaken to stop reluctance to report sexual exploitation of children in general, and related to travel and tourism, as outlined in the recent global developments in the sexual exploitation of children from [Defence for Children Netherlands](#).

Access to Justice and Legal Remedies for Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation

Even where national legal frameworks criminalising sexual exploitation of children, including in the context of travel and tourism and online, are strong, child victims must still overcome significant barriers to access justice and obtain legal remedies. As recommended in the Global Study and further reinforced in the Declaration and Call for Action from the Summit, States have a duty to provide access to child and gender sensitive justice, protection, comprehensive care and full recovery.

The country analysis conducted based on the legal checklist, indicated that 42 out of the 44 countries analysed allow child victims to seek compensation in national courts from convicted offenders and/or through state-managed funds.²⁸ Further, in 37 out of the 44 countries national legislation provides – to different extent - the right for child victims to receive support in their recovery including accessing re-integration services.²⁹

However, children are largely unaware of their rights and there are several formal barriers where children do not receive justice. Children need agency to participate in criminal cases against their abusers, while lawyers and judges need to proactively inform them of their rights. Only 7 out of 44 analysed countries have established child-friendly interviewing practices by professionally trained police, including through the existence of child advocacy centres (also known as *Barnahus*), as part of broader efforts in overcoming barriers to formal justice for children.³⁰

3. Non-governmental organisations

Non-governmental organisations can play a key role by monitoring sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism and bridging gaps left by national governments.

The Global Study recommended non-governmental organisations to, among others, raise public awareness about sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism and the role citizens, including children can play in its prevention.

²⁵ These countries include: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, DR, Ecuador, Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay.

²⁶ The Code. (April - May, 2022). 2022 Code member event - Africa/Asia/Europe summary.

²⁷ Parlement. (2015, March). New campaign against child sex tourism: Don't look away.

²⁸ All countries except: Liberia and Dominican Republic.

²⁹ All countries except: Guyana, Pakistan, Cambodia, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, and Tanzania.

³⁰ The countries include: India, Nepal, Thailand, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico.

When it comes to child participation, sexual exploitation and abuse of children continues to be a taboo topic in several countries, creating resistance to children's participation. Hence, there is a continuous need to raise awareness and 'desensitising' the discussion on the topic of sexual exploitation of children, including by educating parents. Children must be made part of planning interventions and decision-making processes and their voices need to be heard and recognised to break cultural taboos, change mindsets, and improve prevention and disruption of the crime. Survivors' perspectives are increasingly heard and considered (see for example the [Survivors' Perspectives](#) study) but still not sufficiently engaged.

Another recommendation to non-governmental organisations from the Global Study was to undertake more research on sexual exploitation of children. In this regard, further evidence was generated through ECPAT International country level studies, country overviews and issue papers providing clear recommendations among others, on how to improve the use of [extraterritorial jurisdiction and extradition laws](#), develop [child protection standards for the travel and tourism industry](#) or how to [regulate the issue of voluntourism](#) that puts children at risk of sexual exploitation. In 2021, ECPAT International has developed Global Progress Indicators which are carefully designed, measurable aspects of national responses to child sexual exploitation presented as a visual interactive world map. Existing Global Progress Indicators as of March 2023, include references to important topics related to the sexual exploitation of children, such as extraterritoriality and extradition, criminal background checks and protection standards for the travel and tourism industry.

4. Private Sector

Companies active in sectors that play a role in ending the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism are in a unique position: they can have a direct impact on protecting children from this crime. They cannot be passive bystanders but should be actively involved in the protection of children's rights.

Child protection has been progressively recognised as an intrinsic element of a holistic approach to sustainable travel and tourism development as part of the "people, culture and environment" agenda.³¹ It has been included for example in World Travel and Tourism Council's [Action Framework](#) for the Travel & Tourism Sector on preventing human trafficking and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council criteria,³² as well as post-COVID tourism recovery plans. Indicators for progress, among others include the number of businesses that incorporate child protection as part of their business models, conduct due diligence process on children's rights, including in relation to sexual exploitation of children, develop policies and take action to support prevention and response to sexual exploitation of children online and offline in their operations and throughout supply chains.

³¹ World Travel and Tourism Council. Sustainable Growth Framework includes Human Trafficking and child protection among other sustainable initiatives. (Note: The Independent Experts Group on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism (an advisory group that supported the development of the Global Study, organization of Bogota Summit and the implementation of its recommendations), in 2021 merged with the WTTC Human Trafficking Taskforce.)

³² GSTC. (2022). GSTC Criteria Overview. (Note: The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) included child protection among the criteria that serve as the global standards for sustainability in travel and tourism. The criteria are used for education and awareness-raising, policy-making for businesses and government agencies and other organization types, measurement and evaluation, and as a basis for certification.)

United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights marked its 10th anniversary in 2021 by providing a roadmap for the next decade of business and human rights. The roadmap recognised the urgent priority to strengthen the protection of children and respect for those who may be at heightened risk of vulnerability, and who often suffer disparate and disproportionate negative impacts by business operations, including children. Although increasingly recognised, children's rights are still not being given an equal priority in the implementation of the principles. Indeed, very few countries address children's rights in the [national action plans](#) on business and human rights. However, the **Children's Rights and Business Principles** lead to the progress on [embedding children's rights within responsible business practices](#). These principles were developed by UNICEF, the United Nations Global Compact and Save the Children to lay out the implications of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for the business world and are based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Voluntary measures – the example of The Code

[The Code](#) of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (The Code) is a multi-stakeholder initiative which provides awareness, tools and support to the travel and tourism industry with a voluntary set of criteria that members commit to implement, in order to prevent and respond to the sexual exploitation of children. Following up on the Global Study's recommendation on ensuring middle and small size business are aware of the issue and adhere to a code of conduct, in recent years, major standard bearer companies in the application of child protection measures have been joined by smaller companies. Indicators include the increasing number of companies [analysing](#), identifying, mitigating and responding to risks of sexual exploitation of children, as part of their operations and supply chains. As of March 2023, there are 403 member companies implementing The Code's six criteria to protect children, that includes also the [voluntourism policy](#) developed to ensure that only responsible and safe forms of voluntourism are undertaken and offered by The Code members. This responds to growing [expectations of travellers](#) that are increasingly aware and expect more action to be taken by governments and business to protect children from exploitation and abuse.

***Bolivia** brings an [example](#) of fighting child sexual exploitation in travel and tourism with the introduction of The Code and its training and due diligence processes. For example, the six criteria of The Code³³ are being implemented within the Park Rangers Association of 22 protected areas.³⁴ There are training sessions for park rangers, proactive community involvement and cooperation with the Chile border to prevent the trafficking of children.*

Number of ECPAT members engage with the private sector in their role of the [Local Code Representatives](#) building protective environments for children. The Code is an example of a practical tool that provides support to the private sector to act and protect children from sexual exploitation. However, **voluntary measures are not enough. A mix of voluntary and obligatory measures** is needed to create protective environments for children through cooperative approaches, including at community levels and engaging the informal sector, to make destinations safe for children. This is particularly needed in countries with large informal sectors lacking legal regulation. For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean, informal jobs in the tourism industry included 63.3% of workers in hotels and restaurants.³⁵ Similarly, informal employment in ASEAN countries exceeds 80% in construction, hotels and

³³ The Code. What is the Code?.

³⁴ The Code. (2022, April-May). 2022 Code member event - Americas summary.

³⁵ ILO. (2021, June). Towards a sustainable recovery of employment in the tourism sector in Latin America and the Caribbean.

restaurants.³⁶ Additionally, online platforms that provide private accommodation need to implement a due diligence process, to ensure that children are protected. While action has been taken by Airbnb that became a member of The Code at global level, an action-oriented approach is needed at all country levels.

Obligatory measures – developments

Once concluded,³⁷ the United Nations Legally Binding Instrument on Business and Human Rights,³⁸ whose elaboration was mandated by the Human Rights Council in 2014, is expected to be the first global legally binding instrument to tackle prevention, legal liability and redress in respect of business human rights abuses. It is critical as it incorporates a child rights perspective as part of a human rights approach. Based on the draft of the instrument available as of December 2022, States Parties will commit to ensure human rights due diligence measures undertaken by business enterprises to include conducting meaningful considerations with relevant stakeholders such as children as they are constantly interacting with business enterprises as consumers, children of workers, targets of advertising or as workers themselves, often subject to abusive labour practices. This instrument could have a great impact on [protecting children's rights](#) by recognising the distinctive and disproportionate impact of business-related human rights abuses that considers specific circumstance and vulnerabilities of children as well as structural obstacles to obtain legal remedies for such abuses.

Some countries, such as Australia, the United Kingdom, France or Germany already require companies to report on action against contemporary forms of slavery and corporate human rights conduct or require human rights due diligence, although the impact has been limited. Also, the European Union is introducing a series of important directives aimed at social impact reporting and due diligence that are likely to have an impact on destination countries and other regions such as the directive on [corporate sustainability due diligence](#). The obligatory instruments, once adopted or enforced, will serve interlinked purposes and complement each other. The European Union directive focuses on corporate due diligence while the Legally Binding Instrument, as a human rights instrument, is expected to be more victim-centred and cover areas beyond due diligence process that should prioritise also children's rights.

³⁶ ASEAN. (2019, Dec). Regional Study on Informal Employment Statistics to Support Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN. Jakarta: ASEAN.

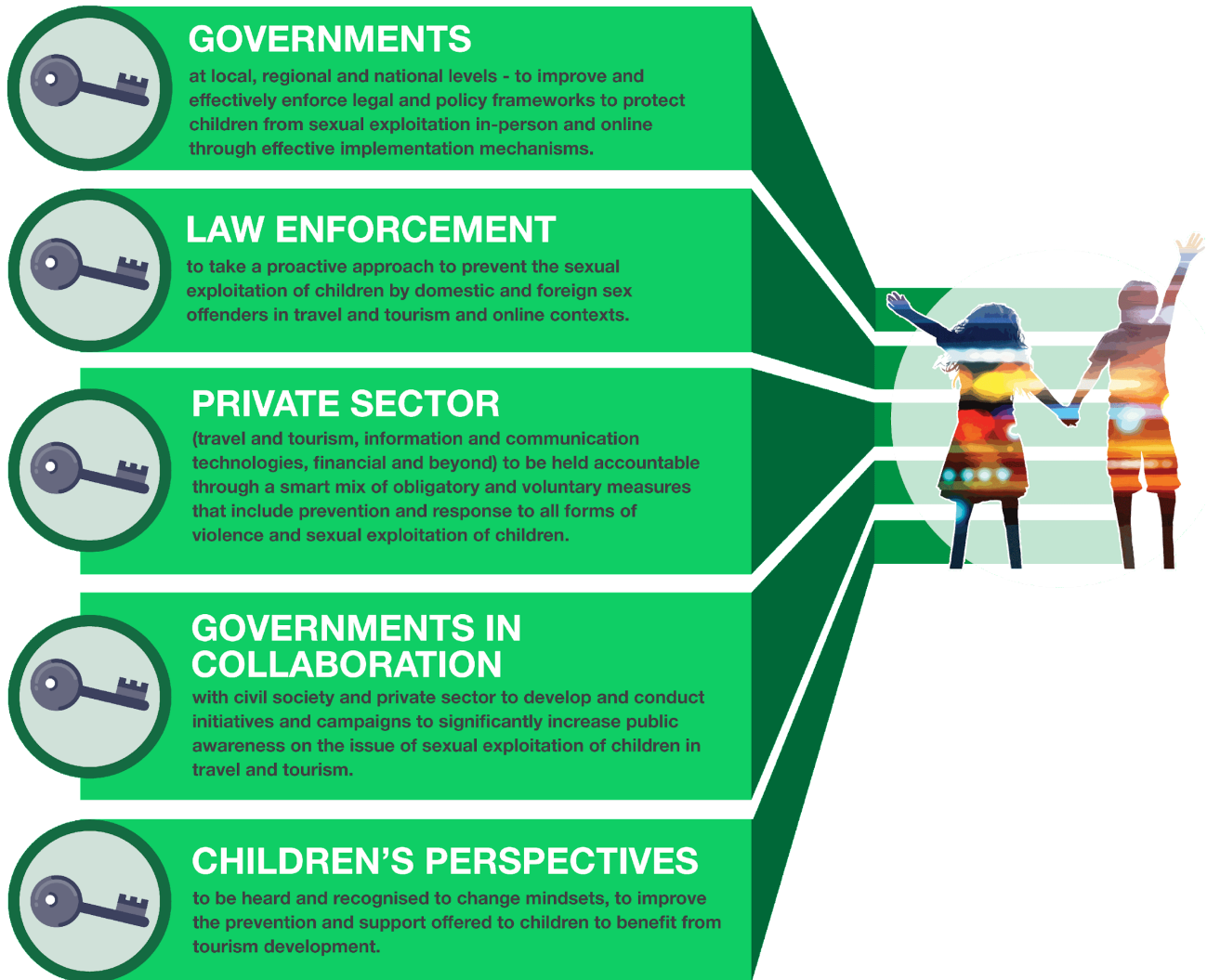
³⁷ OHCHR. (2021). Legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. (Note: The latest Third revised draft)

³⁸ UNHRC. (2014). Elaboration of an international legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights. (Note: HYPERLINK "https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/26/9"Resolution A/HRC/RES/26/9 on the Elaboration of an international legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights, see of the OEIGWG. sessions of the OEIGWG.)

CONCLUSIONS

Sustainable development of travel and tourism requires an increasing respect of business for children's rights, and States meeting their duty to protect them.

The key milestones to achieve in the coming years, include:



Protecting children and preventing violence is all the more important in light of the recovery of the travel and tourism industry. This sector is instrumental in the process of accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The upcoming report of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children on child protection in travel and tourism - to be presented to the United Nations General Assembly 2023 - will serve as a means to re-engage with existing champions that contributed to the Global Study and the International Summit. It will further mobilise those that have not been actively involved in the first Global Study and in the process of the implementation of its recommendations, to embark in a movement of further accountability towards children.