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# Sex Workers Day: An Appeal from DMSC

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## An Appeal from DMSC

To Observe: Sex Workers Rights Day on 3rd of March 2002

Dear Friends & Colleagues,

At the outset we would like to introduce ourselves even though many of you might be knowing us through Sonagachi project. The name of our organization is Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee [DMSC]. Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), founded in 1995, is an exclusive forum of 60,000 sex workers [Male, Female and Transgender] and their children. As part of our on-going programme to put sex workers rights on the global agenda in the new millennium, we organized a carnival of Sex-workers from 03 to 06 March 2001 at Yuba Bharati Krirangan (Salt Lake Stadium), Kolkata, India, what provided a meeting ground for sex workers from across the country and beyond, as well as organisations and individuals committed to the rights of sex workers and rights to do sex work. The carnival was attended by more than 25 thousands sex-workers and around 30000 people [non sex workers] representing from different walks of life. Representatives from 29 sex workers organizations across 15 different countries did attend the program. The Mela provided an unique opportunity to discuss on various issues ranging from sex and sexuality, State and patriarchy, Rights of minorities to decriminalization of sex trade, empowerment of sex workers, Prevention of HIV/AIDS, Anti-trafficking and so on so forth.

This year we have planned to organize sex workers carnival in a bigger scale. We expect around 80000 participants which will include 3000 sex workers representing different sex workers organizations across Asia Europe, North and South America. The central objective of organising this year's carnival is [we called it SANTI UTSAB [Peace festival] is to reinforce our collective demands for securing social recognition of sex work as a valid profession, establishing sex worker right to self-determination and decriminalisation of adult prostitution. Our other equally important aim is to create a space for sex workers to interact with each other and other members of the civil society and the State to celebrate life over death and destruction, privilege pleasure over pain and deprivation, and strive for peace rather than conflict and violence. There will be lot of cultural program performed both by the sex workers and other folk artists from this subcontinent.

We felt strongly that that we should have a day what need to be observed by the sex workers community globally. Keeping in view the large mobilization of all types of global sex workers [Female, Male, Transgender] during Carnival we propose to observe 3rd March as THE SEX WORKERS RIGHTS DAY. Essentially 3rd March falls in between Labor day and Women's day what seems to us an added advantage. In fact we have succeeded in mobilizing opinion of a sizable section of Trade union leaders who would be supporting our demands on that day. Knowing fully well that the main stream Women groups and organizations in general are not in favor of our view point we have stretched our program to include women's day [8th March] where a good number of women's organizations will participate in an open dialogue and we expect a section of them will support our movement. To a certain extent we have mobilized both printing and electronic Media and we expect both National and International coverage. So we don't want to lose this unique opportunity to give a call for International sex workers rights day. Knowing the usual response of international bodies and views of academicians and intellectuals of the 1st world [many of them consider that sex workers of third world are different from 1st world and can't take their decision] a call coming from a third world country would be more appropriate at this juncture, we believe. It will be a great pleasure to us if all of you observe the day in

your own countries too. We do expect all of your presence in Kolkata during this SANTI UTSAB [Peace festival] We need your inspiration and support to turn our dreams into reality. During this Carnival we hope to celebrate our lives and our struggle and exchange our stories as part of our unrelenting movement to change histories through all possible means and expressions. There will be lot of fun at the Mela. It is just your participation what is most important.

## BACKGROUND.

The founding members of DMSC had come together through their active involvement as peer educators in a STD/HIV prevention intervention program, widely known as the Sonagachi Project, which has been running since 1992. Since then we have been successfully networking among sex workers in India and some other countries, particularly in South and South-East Asia, to foreground the demands for promotion and protection of our rights. Our political objectives are decriminalization of adult prostitution, securing social recognition of sex work as a valid profession and establishing sex workers right to self-determination. We hope to bring together 80000 or more delegates for this seminal meet, probably the first of its kind in this part of the world. Although our resources are limited, our dreams are unbounded and our enthusiasm is high and commitment unwavering. With your support, we are determined to make this event a grand success. We believe **ONLY RIGHTS CAN STOP THE WRONGS.**

In Solidarity

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President, DMSC  
Kolkata, India.