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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ASIJIKI COALITION APPLAUDS THE MULTI-PARTY WOMEN'S CAUCUS SUPPORT FOR THE DECRIMINALISATION OF SEX WORK.**

Sex workers and sex worker advocates gathered in Parliament on Wednesday 2 November for a second meeting on the decriminalisation of sex work called for by the Multi-Party Women's Caucus.

The first agenda item was providing a platform for Dellene Clark from the South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC) and the Deputy Minister of Justice, Mr John Jeffreys, to provide input on why the report providing recommendations on sex work law reform has not yet been released. Advocates for sex worker rights have pressurised SALRC and the Department of Justice since 2009 to release their recommendations, but have repeatedly heard the Department of Justice noting that this will be "imminent". Six (6) years have passed since SALRC published the Discussion Paper on 'Adult Prostitution', but with no sex work legal framework to mention. In July 2016 the Women's Legal Centre (WLC), on behalf of the Asijiki Coalition, launched a Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) request to access the report, but no response was received from the Department. In September 2016, WLC lodged a further appeal in terms of the Act, requesting for the information.

During Wednesday's meeting, Jeffreys noted that the Department had received a final report from SALRC in 2015, which was now before Cabinet. "We are waiting to get cabinet approval for a proposed position," he said. The report will be released into the public domain only once Cabinet has approved it.

Jeffreys mentioned that the report will hopefully be released before the end of this year. However, Asijiki remains concerned about the delay. In the meantime, all aspects of sex work remain criminalised which make sex workers particularly vulnerable to violence, abuse, rape and illness. Law reform remains extremely urgent.

"We have been waiting some time now, and we expected to get to draft legislation at this

point – not just a public debate, as this has been debated for years now,” said Dudu Dlamini from the Sisonke sex workers movement.

The Women’s Caucus ended the engagement by affirming their commitment to decriminalisation as a policy recommendation, and committed themselves to keep working towards this goal. We applaud this sentiment, and support the Multi-Party Women’s Caucus in this crucial endeavour.

Further, we call on civil society to put pressure on the Deputy Minister of Justice to hasten the publication of the SALRC report on ‘adult prostitution’. We also call on others to stand in support of the fight for the decriminalisation of sex work in South Africa!

Signed,

**Asijiki Coalition for the Decriminalisation of Sex Work**

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