Costa Rica - US agree to fight back sexual tourism

Several U.S. institutions and the Costa Rican government have set going a joint program aimed at exposing and combating sexual exploitation of children by American tourists.

This particular form of exploitation affects some two million children worldwide, many of them below five years of age," sighed off John Wilkinson, Vice President of World Vision, one of the organizations that have signed up for the campaign alongside the U.S. State and Homeland Security departments.

Rosalia Nuñez, Costa Rica's Vice Minister of Children and Adolescence Assistance, said in a press conference that regardless of the many attractions that have put her country on the map, the Central American nation is no safe haven for international child molesters and abusers.

World Vision Director Joe Mettimano explained the campaign is aimed at discouraging American tourists -including schoolteachers, military personnel and businesspeople- from abusing kids by enforcing tougher sentences on those who break the law.

World Vision, one of the world's largest non-lucrative organizations, revealed its intention to take the program to other countries like Mexico and Brazil. As we speak, the project is underway in the U.S., Costa Rica, Cambodia and Thailand.

According to World Vision, a quarter of tourists traveling around the world in search of children to quench their twisted sex desires hails from the United States. In the case of Latin America, that percentage hovers around 80 percent.

Developing countries are the destination of choice of traveling child molesters, with Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil and the Dominican Republic standing high on the list in the western hemisphere.