

## **Ukrainian Chairmanship allocution at the ceremony on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Social Charter**

- The European Social Charter signed in Turin fifty years ago, in 1961, was at that time the second major human rights treaty adopted within the Council of Europe, after the European Convention of Human Rights. Both treaties arise from the decision of the Council of Europe to give binding force to the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- The rights that States Parties are bound to protect and promote under the Social Charter system are currently known as “social rights”, and their common rationale is that human beings must have the right to enjoy decent living conditions as members of the social organised environment in which they live.

- The underlying values of the Charter, such as human dignity, solidarity and non-discrimination, imply that as part of a community all persons should be guaranteed, for example, education, just working conditions and fair remuneration, that social and medical assistance should be provided to those who need it, that affordable housing should be guaranteed and that all forms of discrimination in the enjoyment of social rights be eradicated. These values are important in promoting a sense of collective social responsibility in both the State and the people, something which for example is much needed in my own country.

- The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Social Charter is an occasion to have a constructive reflection on the future of this treaty and its supervisory mechanisms. In its history, the Charter has already undergone periods of important normative and institutional reforms, namely in the 1990's, when the protocol providing for a system of collective complaints and the Revised Charter were adopted. It is important to continue exploring avenues for further reforms of the Charter with a view to making the system even more effective.

- Of particular importance is that States –besides those already Parties- accept the collective complaints procedure. And equally important that national trade unions and NGOs become more and more aware of its existence and usefulness as a tool to obtain from public authorities an effective respect for social rights. Considering the virtues and good results produced up to now by the collective complaints procedure when it has been used, the low level of acceptance by States – only 14 –risks to substantially undermine the Charter system of social rights protection.

- The reflection on other proposals, for instance related to changes in the reporting system, should also be carefully examined. If the proposed biennial reporting system were to raise the capacity of the European Committee of Social

Rights to focus on major problems in the implementation of the Charter, it should be welcome.

- Let's hope that this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary will identify steps forward so that the European Social Charter will continue being an effective control and prevention mechanism for social rights violations in Europe. [In this respect, it would be desirable that the Declaration adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 12 October serve as a catalyst for any necessary changes and will give political impulse to the Social Charter. ]