



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON  
**VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

**Reaching the heights for the rights of the child**

**Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child  
2016-2021**

**High-Level Launching Conference**

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**Statements**

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Mr President,  
Madame Deputy Secretary General,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Keita, our young friend the adolescent in the video that we just saw invites us all to join or create circles of non-violence. Circles that can transform the world. The Council of Europe is certainly one of these circles, a circle with a long history of commitment and action, ready to reach the heights for the rights of the child! A circle I am honored to join! My deep gratitude goes to the Bulgarian authorities and the Council of Europe for gathering us here today.

Since the adoption of the UN Study on violence against children in 2006 and the launch, the same year, of the Programme “Building a Europe for and with Children”, the consecutive **Council of Europe strategies on the rights of the child have consistently aimed at eliminating violence against children.**



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During the past ten years, the recommendations of the UN Study have guided the Council of Europe efforts in this field and its member States are today better equipped to prevent and respond to violence against children. Unfortunately, millions of children are still left behind, their balloons completely deflated.

But we have **a historic opportunity** to reach the heights for all children!

As you know, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in NY a few months ago, includes the elimination of all forms of violence against children as a specific target and a cross-cutting concern. I am convinced that, **through its new Strategy on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe can make a decisive contribution** to the implementation of this ambitious, universal and transformational Agenda. Let me just mention a few key actions.

1. First, the CoE can **support member States in the integration of the elimination of violence against children in their national frameworks**, in particular by promoting integrated national strategies to prevent violence against children and by encouraging multi-stakeholders reviews at national level. These national strategies on violence against children constitute indeed a key component of the national development agenda each country is required to put in place. The newly established Committee on the Rights of the Child will be a key player in this effort.
2. Second, through the mainstreaming efforts and the other four pillars of its new strategy, the Council of Europe can **ensure the necessary links with other targets in the 2030 Agenda which are equally important for the CoE** (such as those related to quality education, social protection and inclusion, gender equality, accountable and transparent institutions, and access to justice for all).
3. Third, the CoE can consider how its **various bodies and institutions can support the** collection of data and information needed to review progress. For instance, monitoring bodies (such as the Lanzarote Committee, GRETA or GREVIO) could inform the global indicator framework by proposing guidance for national indicators such as national legislation to ban all forms of violence against children and on national strategies to prevent and address incidents of violence.
4. Fourth: in cooperation with the United Nations and very especially with my mandate, the CoE can become a **regional forum to assess and stimulate progress by European countries** on violence-related targets in the SDGs.

With these important measures, the CoE can actively and meaningfully contribute to the UN process of review and follow-up to the SDGs relevant to children's rights and their protection from violence. CoE could consider participating in and **contributing to the relevant United Nations processes** and global partnerships aiming at promoting and reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

With the 2030 Agenda, the role of the Council of Europe at regional, national and global level will become even more strategic and influential. The role of member States remains crucial in this regard to put the elimination of violence against children high in their national agenda, guided by the Council of Europe standards; making good use of the multi-stakeholder cooperation forums that it offers and working tirelessly to defend the values we all stand for. Leadership and bold steps are needed to address the many challenges that compromise children's rights. And robust child protection systems are urgent to prevent children from becoming the victims of political, social or economic crisis.

It is indeed High Time to end Violence against Children. It is high time to close the gap between the commitments and the actions needed. It is high time to address root causes of violence and promote a culture of respect for children's rights and zero tolerance of violence. It is high time to mobilize all those who can actively engage in this important effort, transforming this momentum into an unstoppable movement towards a world free from violence against children.

I therefore invite you all to join our High Time to End Violence against Children Initiative and create a Europe-wide circle of non-violence. The sum of all our efforts should be zero. Zero violence.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

We must indeed reach the heights for children. Because we cannot stand tall as human beings if we don't stand up for children's rights.

Thank you for your attention