



Save the 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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Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, last but not least young people

It is with great pleasure that I am here today, representing Save the Children.

First of all please allow me to express my gratitude to the Government of Bulgaria for convening such an important high level conference and to the Council of Europe for its long-standing commitment to children's rights including their right to protection from all forms of violence.

I am particularly proud today to commemorate with you the 10th year anniversary of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, because like many in this room, I was present at the launch of the Study. As a consequence of the Study, the UN General Assembly agreed to the creation of the office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children. Through you Ms. Moreno, we express gratitude to Ms. Marta Santos Pais for her never ending commitment to eliminate violence against children.



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
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Save the Children welcomes the adoption of the new Child Rights Strategy. It comes at an historic moment. In September 2015, the United Nations' General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), setting a universal agenda for the next fifteen years applicable to all countries. Governments, including all 47 members of the Council of Europe, have committed to the SDGs, including putting in place international, regional and national mechanisms to implement the agenda. For the first time these goals include specific reference to ending all forms of violence against children as well as tackling a number of other serious violations of children's rights to protection.

With this as a catalyst, a number of partners, including UNICEF, the office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children, and Child focused agencies, including Save the Children, have come together to start building a *global partnership to end violence against children*. The primary purpose of the partnership is expected to be the delivery of SDG target 16.2 and other relevant SDG targets (5.2, 5.3, 8.7, etc.)

To deliver on the violence against children targets, we need to harness the power of governments, the private sector, civil society, communities of faith and academia to combine and build on all their efforts, provide leadership and demonstrate practical results for children and families.

In this regards, Governments should adopt or adapt existing national plans that are rights based, making ending VAC a national priority, and ensure to involve civil society and children. In addition these plans must strengthen child protection systems to provide long term solutions to prevention and response. The approach requires multi-sectorial collaboration among different Ministries, working to a common and ambitious goal, with dedicated funding and human resources. To measure our progress we need to collect data through the global indicators and existing data indicators that tell us what is happening to children in all settings.

The last 10 years have demonstrated that progress can be made and that good foundations are already in place to accelerate that progress. As part of our contribution to the follow-up to the UN Study, we have aimed to develop effective interventions to end violence against children, empower children themselves in this cause and encourage and support action by governments and others around the world.

But much remains to be done.

The continued use of physical and humiliating violence against children, still "defended" by many national laws, is a grave violation of children's rights.

Violent punishment of children increases the wider use of violence in society and legitimizes it in the eyes of succeeding generations. It also promotes a double standard, with two categories of citizens – children and adults. It is viewed as acceptable to hit children, but not adults.

We hope the states represented here will commit to work closely together to step up the pressure – regionally and internationally – to achieve its universal prohibition and elimination.

That vision is now in sight - last week Mongolia became the 49th country to ban corporal punishment in all settings.

Like the Council of Europe, Save the Children strongly supports child participation. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) places an obligation on governments to fulfill, protect and respect the right of girls and boys to express their views, as individuals and as a constituency, in all matters of concern to them, and to have their views taken seriously.

Children and young people have unique perspectives and expertise that can shed light on the challenges they face and on the best strategies for resolving them, and when provided the opportunity and necessary information, they can make a significant contribution to decisions affecting their lives.

Excellencies,

We are at a special new moment in history. Nearly 250 million children live in regions affected by conflict.¹ In all parts of the world the numbers of refugees, internally displaced people and asylum-seekers are on the rise as a result of violence and persecution,² and the total number is now higher than at any time since the end of the Second World War. More than half of the world's 60 million displaced people are under the age of 18.³

Support for displaced people is stuck in the "humanitarian" box, meaning that fulfilling the rights of refugees and other displaced populations is rarely integrated into national development plans. Reliance on short-term humanitarian aid for these populations undermines their resilience, denies them long-term development opportunities and ultimately increases the likelihood of long-term dependence on humanitarian aid – at a time when the international humanitarian system can least afford it.

When an unaccompanied or separated child crosses national borders, states have the responsibilities of putting in place responses to address their general and specific protection needs according to the best interests of the child. Unaccompanied or separated children should access family-based alternative care, they should have full access to education and to adequate standard of living, to health care and be protected from exploitation, abuse and violence.

The Council of Europe States have particular responsibility to provide refuge, assistance and support. And as the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said "today, they are refugees. Tomorrow they can be students and professors, scientists and researchers, workers and caregivers. They can enrich society, drive growth and contribute to our shared progress."

Thank you.

¹ UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children 2016 Overview

http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/HAC_2016_Overview_ENG.pdf

² From UNHCR, Global Trends: World at War, 2015; also press release "UNHCR report confirms worldwide rise in forced displacement in the first half of 2015" 18 December.

³ SG's report 4