



## 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

Sofia, 5-6 April 2016

#### Statements

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UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

Madam Deputy Secretary General, Excellencies, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here in Sofia on the occasion of the launch of the new **Council of Europe Strategy** on the Rights of the Child. I am proud that a project that I initiated when I was Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe in 2006 is alive and kicking.

10 years have elapsed since the Council of Europe launched its Programme “Building a Europe for and with children” in Monaco and a lot has been accomplished since then in terms of legislation, institution building and awareness raising, but a lot **more is still needed**.

As the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, I value a **strategic and comprehensive approach** for the eradication of violence against children, of which sexual abuse and exploitation constitutes one of its most abject components.

I am also heartened to see that the CoE new Strategy offers support to my mandate.



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Council of Europe  
November 2015 – May 2016  
**Présidence de la Bulgarie**  
Conseil de l'Europe  
Novembre 2015 – Mai 2016  
L'UNITÉ FAIT LA FORCE



COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Ladies and gentleman,

The Council of Europe work in this area and my Mandate are mutually reinforcing. **Country visits, thematic studies, communications and awareness** raising activities are all carried out with a view to putting an end to this scourge. In the CoE, the recent creation of the Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child looks very promising in this respect.

In terms of **standards** there is equally complementarity between the CoE Conventions (Lanzarote and Budapest) and the OP SC, the former being more explicit for the need to criminalise certain offences such as grooming, possession of CAM, in whatever form.

Whereas 7 MS of the CoE still need to ratify the Lanzarote Convention<sup>1</sup> and another 7 the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime<sup>2</sup>, the OPSC leaves only 1 CoE MS lagging behind<sup>3</sup>.

Yet, we share the concern that, in spite of the legal obligations undertaken at an international level – in Europe and globally- the commitments expressed by all governments and reaffirmed here today by many of you; and the progress on international cooperation, including at law enforcement level, too many children continue to be subject to all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, both online and offline, leaving scars for a life time. The current migration crisis has increased the vulnerability of thousands of children arriving on European soil.

As with any aspect of my mandate, the recurring challenge is the **absence of comprehensive disaggregated data**. An effective strategy is only feasible if there is a thorough sense of the situation on the ground.

A constant throughout different thematic studies of my mandate has been the identification of those who are at the source of these abhorrent forms of violence against children. In my latest Report to the HRC, I have been able to delve into the **different types and levels of demand** for the sexual exploitation of children

It has been a common **misconception** to focus only on those who directly abuse and exploit children. Yet, those who ensure that the demand is satisfied or worse who foster it are at the heart of the sexual exploitation of children and must be held accountable. Furthermore, there are certain enabling factors which facilitate sexual exploitation of children and require long term efforts in order to be reversed. Gender discrimination and commodification of girls are still widely spread.

A comprehensive strategy should be based on a **three-pronged approach**. Firstly, prevention is necessary to address the majority of underlying factors of the demand. as well as to dissuade individuals from committing such heinous crimes. Secondly, it is essential to deal with existing offenders by ensuring accountability, which also addresses the underlying factor of impunity. Lastly, to be able to prevent reoffending, there should be evidence and results-based rehabilitation programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Norway, United Kingdom

<sup>2</sup> Andorra, Greece, Ireland, Monaco, Russia, San Marino, Sweden

<sup>3</sup> Ireland

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The **ICT environment** is adding to the complexity of the cause we are addressing, as it can be both a facilitator of these crimes to be committed and a powerful tool to stop them!

It has never been easier for perpetrators to make contact with children, or to share images of abuse and inspire each other to commit further crimes. This demands a coordinated global response by governments, law enforcement, technology companies and civil society.

The WePROTECT/Global Alliance to end online child sexual exploitation is that response. Its mission is to empower everyone with a responsibility to protect children online to identify and protect victims, remove child sexual abuse material from the internet and strengthen cooperation to track down the perpetrators of this abuse all over the world.

The value of a genuinely multi-stakeholder approach, where governments work in partnership with the technology industry and civil society is beyond any doubt. This is true as much online as it is off line.

I take this opportunity to call, as I did in UN fora, for the creation of a permanent **global taskforce** to harmonise practises, share expertise and scale up good practises and to provide states with assistance in developing national laws, policies and strategies to effectively combat sexual exploitation on line. This global taskforce could also work for the evaluation of compliance with legal standards, going beyond their mere ratification.

The We Protect Global Alliance could well be the embryo for such permanent platform, as there is a clear overspill between on and off line abuse.

Ministers, Ladies and Gentleman,

The inclusion in the **new development agenda** of a distinct target (16.2) to “end abuse, exploitation trafficking and all forms of violence against children” provides a unique opportunity to galvanise political will and mobilise wide social support for protecting all children from these unspeakable crimes.

Thank you for your attention.