

10th anniversary of the Council of Europe Convention for the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

**Conference on “Ending sexual exploitation and abuse of children:
Towards a world of trust”**

Tuesday 24 – Wednesday 25 October 2017

**Baroness Doreen Massey
Representing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
at this event**

Opening Session:

Speaking notes

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues, dear friends,

- I am happy to be here with you and to have been invited to address you on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, where I currently hold the function of Chairperson to the Sub-Committee on Children.
- This Conference is entitled “Ending sexual exploitation and abuse of children: Towards a world of trust”. A lot is contained in this title: In the 21st century, as in previous times, children are still being exploited and abused in many ways, sexually but also with other vicious or violent purposes. Some of the forms of child abuse are quite new and did not exist before, such as those employing information and communication technologies to reach out to children. There is indeed an increased need for the protection of children against these evolving forms of criminality. I am glad to see that these matters and

what the digital environment means for children's rights and child protection will be addressed by the present conference.

- Most of the exploitation and abuse of children is still taking place in a circle of trust or in the daily environment of children, so it is wise to set the focus on “a world of trust” and discuss how families, friendships, schools and other institutions or organisations, and the digital environment can yet be made safer for our children, who, in the modern world, have a larger “range of motion” than ever before.
- The Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly, along with other partners, have undertaken much substantial work to fight against the sexual exploitation and abuse of children over the past years. The Lanzarote Convention for the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse is certainly one of the centre pieces of this play and is recognised world-wide as the most comprehensive legal instrument in this field. In my capacity as Chairperson of the Assembly's Sub-Committee on Children I have had the pleasure to participate in the meetings of the related Committee of the Parties and will once again do so later this week.
- In order to promote this key tool, the Council of Europe's children's rights division and the Parliamentary Assembly had jointly developed and given life to the Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children, involving a large range of material (print and film), many meetings, an active parliamentary network and an uncountable number of national activities, some of which we shall be reminded of during this Conference. I would once again like to congratulate all Parties involved in this outstanding

initiative for their commitment. The Campaign came to an end in 2015, our parliamentarians at the Assembly continued to promote some of its key issues in 2016, but I trust that these activities have changed mind-sets in many countries and will continue to deploy positive effects.

- In my personal career and life, including as a teacher and an MP, but also as a mother and grandmother, I have always been fighting violence and sexual violence against children: for example, I was active as Chairperson of the All-party group for children in the British parliament.
- On behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, where we now have a new President who is herself extremely committed to children's rights, I would like to assure you that we will keep sexual violence high up on our agendas. We will do so notably through our political reports generating specific recommendations for all national governments and parliaments. One of our most recent texts, for example, addressed the over-sexualisation of children and the need for sex and relationship education empowering children.
- A new reference has now reached us on the UN Sustainable Development Goals to explore how to implement them effectively, and I am confident that, once again jointly with the Council of Europe children's rights division, we shall also once again focus on children's rights in this context.
- The main goal of the Parliamentary Assembly will continue to be the promotion of the highest European standards. In this respect, I call

upon the governments and parliaments of the five Council of Europe member States which have not yet ratified the Lanzarote Convention to do so; this includes my own country, the United Kingdom, next to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ireland and Norway.

- As a long-standing parliamentarian, I know that national parliaments have a key role to play in this matter, first to change national laws in compliance with instruments like the Lanzarote Convention, but also to ensure follow-up and supervision of governmental action in this field to ensure that action taken is effective and has a true impact on children. As a parliamentarian and children's rights activist, I continue to commit to this issue and I will invite others around me to do so, both in my national parliament and in the Parliamentary Assembly.
- I now wish you fruitful debates over the coming two days and I wish us that we will all find inspiration and new ideas to take home, on how to better protect children against sexual violence and exploitation.