

## **CLOSING**

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International Conference**

**THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN TACKLING  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

*Rome, 30 November 2012*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you, on behalf of the Council of Europe, for your contributions in making this International Conference fruitful, successful and most importantly extremely inspiring.

The Council of Europe's ambition and hope for this event was to raise awareness on the Lanzarote Convention and to share and learn about good practices in tackling, and eradicating sexual violence against children in different parts of the world.

I have to admit that the results go far beyond my expectations.

We heard of ground-breaking work, led by the Italian international cooperation which has really made the promotion of the Council of Europe Convention to protect children against sexual exploitation and sexual violence a **top priority**. The impact of this leadership has been showcased with the presentations of the many outstanding projects Italy funds and supports abroad.

This is really where I feel we have exceeded the objectives of just raising awareness on the Lanzarote Convention. I saw the Lanzarote Convention in action in Lebanon, in Senegal, in Cambodia and in many other countries, directly or indirectly. This is really outstanding.

We have had the privilege to hear presentations by key experts who were **involved in the drafting** and who built the potential of the Lanzarote Convention's provision on international cooperation; They should be proud of the impact this negotiation is having today; it would be desirable that other member states of the Council of Europe become inspired by the potential of article 38 and consider aligning their priorities in international cooperation by also focusing on the Lanzarote Convention in a spirit of solidarity and mutual cooperation.

The discussions have proven that the Lanzarote Convention is **far-reaching** in terms of geographical outreach and of potential to change; they proved how **comprehensive this instrument is**. Its impact is travelling across borders, it has the potential to influence legal, political and policy agenda even outside Council of Europe member states because indeed this Convention can be acceded to by non-member states. I hope to welcome Morocco soon as a State Party to the Convention.

The need for a **multidisciplinary and holistic** approach that brings together all the institutions concerned and the role of parliaments and local authorities was also highlighted and indeed the Italian authorities have really showcased how key Ministries are collaborating together to reach out to have a real impact, in Italy and abroad.

There is strong agreement on the fact that with the relevant Council of Europe Conventions, recommendations adopted by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly - together with the One in Five Campaign material – **tools are there to fight sexual violence against children** – and to **empower children**.

We cannot stop **at signature and ratification**. The main challenge ahead is to ensure that these standards are **implemented now, not tomorrow**, so that the children of today can be protected, whatever their personal situation may be.

My sincere thanks to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence for having allowed us to visualise such implementation by learning about the many concrete initiatives carried out and on-going projects.

Dear participants, we have had the opportunity to share our practice. **It is now time to coordinate and to cooperate together to stop sexual violence against children at home and abroad!**