

"Parliaments united in combating sexual violence against children"

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and Sustainable Development**

**Conference on Preventing sexual abuse of children
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Tuesday 10 December 2013 session 2 (3-4.30 pm)

Mr Ghilechi: the Parliamentary Network to stop sexual violence against children

Dear members of the Spanish government,

Dear members of the Lanzarote Committee,

Dear experts and participants,

It is a pleasure for me to participate in this important conference on the prevention of sexual abuse of children organised in the framework of the capacity-building activities of the Lanzarote Committee. I would like to thank the Spanish government and the Council of Europe for inviting the Parliamentary Assembly and the Fundació "La Caixa" for hosting this event.

- Presentation

I am a Deputy of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. I am personally interested in children's issues. As rapporteur of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I prepared a report on "fighting "child sex tourism"" which was unanimously adopted by the Assembly in April this year¹.

- A living Network of parliamentarians: the will of the Assembly to make the fight against sexual abuse of children a political priority

As you may know, the Assembly decided to commit itself to the fight against sexual violence against children and created a Network of contact

¹ Resolution 1926 (2013) "Fighting "child sex tourism"" is at the disposal of participants.

parliamentarians involved in the ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children. To date, the Network comprises 53 parliamentarians representing nearly all the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, as well as members of *l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* and parliamentarians from Mexico and Morocco.

As a member of the Network, I would like to stress the important work that the Network has done in those last 3 years. As a main result we now have 29 ratifications of the Lanzarote Convention. That means that the protection of children will be improved in our countries and the prosecution of abusers will be more efficient.

✓ The strong involvement of parliamentarians

Ratifying the convention and changing the law is one thing, but implementation is another one. This is why I would like to underline the importance of prevention and awareness-raising at all levels. I can say that parliamentarians are really committed to this action. They are of course promoting the Lanzarote Convention in their own parliaments but, they are also campaigning very hard, taking their activities to the general public.

A lot of activities were developed by national parliaments and parliamentarians. I want to list just a few. You will find a number of others in the compendium of actions and good practice which has been put at your disposal². This compendium will be updated in January 2014 to include the activities in 2013.

As a topical example, my Greek colleague Eleni Rapti had a lot of meetings with the Greek authorities, including with the Prime Minister. She is the coordinator of the ONE in FIVE Campaign in Greece. She herself organised so many events all over Greek cities, stands of awareness-raising with young children and adolescents and large audience TV shows on every channel of the public TV.

I will mention just a few other examples. Upon a proposal by Ms Sevinj Fataliyeva, contact parliamentarian for Azerbaijan, a conference was organised on 11 June 2013 in Baku on "The well-being of children as an indicator for the well-being of society". The aim of the conference was to reinforce measures aiming at helping children to report sexual abuse in their circle of trust. Participants discussed the necessity of cooperation between institutions and professionals, including teachers, medical staff and law enforcement agencies.

² The compendium is at the disposal of participants.

Recently, under the auspices of the NGO « International Children's Center », a parliamentary conference launched the Turkish ONE in FIVE Campaign in the parliament, with 100 participants, including 15 parliamentarians, NGO representatives and academics.

✓ The recent activities of the Network of Contact Parliamentarians

As I said, the Network of Parliamentarians which has, to date, 53 members, including parliamentarians from Mexico and Morocco, is very active.

Since the last meeting of your Committee on 14-15 October in Strasbourg, our Network has held an extraordinary meeting in Geneva on 13 November 2013 to discuss the theme "Taking the fight against sexual violence against children to the world – Sharing the European experience".

The aims of the meeting were:

- First, to exchange good practice with a view to stimulating legal and political action to stop sexual violence against children at European and international levels;
- Second, to raise awareness amongst the international community of the importance of ratifying the Lanzarote Convention and of other measures possibly to be taken at European and international levels;
- Third, to give visibility to good practice of the Network of Contact Parliamentarians and sharing the European experience.

The exchange with representatives from UNICEF and the Inter-Parliamentary Union promoted Council of Europe standards and activities in the field of the fight against sexual abuse of children. They also provided a substantial input to debates at international, European and national levels.

The intervention of Ms Najat Maalla M'jid, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, was the occasion to develop the means of a greater cooperation at international level. Ms Maalla M'jid issued an appeal for states to work together more effectively across borders to stop the commercial exploitation of children: "We need to act, and for that, we need political will."

The parliamentarians also held an exchange of views with Mr Hans Guyt, campaigns director for children's rights NGO "Terre des Hommes" and the man behind the "Sweetie" project to unmask online child sexual predators using a virtual girl. Mr Guyt emphasized the need to allow the police to act to prevent the crime of sexual abuse against children before it is committed.

- ✓ The meetings of the Network in the field of prevention of sexual abuse of children

To mention just a few meetings focused on prevention, let me briefly list some of the recent issues the Network examined:

- on 27 June 2012 on young sex offenders and children with sexual behaviour problems;
 - on 3rd October 2012 on empowering children - making them strong against sexual violence;
 - on 24 April 2013 on sexual abuse of children by their peers;
 - on 25 June 2013 on child sexual abuse in sport, which was a joint meeting with the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media.
- ✓ The next meeting of the Network will be held on 29 January 2014 in Strasbourg on "sexual exploitation of girls"

The two networks of the Assembly, the network "Women Free from Violence" and our network to stop sexual violence against children, decided to have a joint meeting. Your experience in this field and suggestions for experts are welcome.

- ✓ A video spot for adolescents

The Assembly decided to design a tool for adolescents to complete the campaign tools and asked the young promising filmmaker Roland Edzard to create a video-spot. Children and adolescents facing sexual abuse within their family are being encouraged to "break the silence" and speak out about it in a powerful new short video that I invite you to watch www.assembly.coe.int/oneinfive/video. A shorter version of the video for adolescents was broadcast on European channels on 20 November 2013 on the occasion of the UN Children's day. Bookmarks referring to the video and

containing a QR code linking up to the video are at your disposal on the display stand³.

- The involvement of the Parliamentary Assembly: two reports debated in the plenary during the April part-session.

I would very much like to report on the two texts that were unanimously adopted by the Assembly on 23 April 2013:

Sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism, also referred to as “child sex tourism”, affects tens of thousands of children in the world, violating their fundamental rights and dignity. In the Resolution on “fighting “child sex tourism””, the Assembly called on Council of Europe member states to protect children against all forms of sexual exploitation, both within their borders and beyond. Europe is concerned by this phenomenon both as a sending and receiving region of “travelling sex offenders”. With a view to fighting effectively against child sex tourism, States should sign up to regional and international standards in the field of protection of children against sexual exploitation and ensure that their laws comply with these standards: Council of Europe member states should enact laws enabling them to prosecute “child sex tourists” for acts committed abroad, what is called extraterritorial jurisdiction.

In its Recommendation on “Parliaments united in combating sexual violence against children: mid-term review of the ONE in FIVE Campaign”, the Assembly underlined that the biggest success of the campaign so far has been the significant increase in the number of ratifications of the Lanzarote Convention, which reached 29 to date. Regarding more specifically your Committee and its capacity-building activities, I am pleased to inform you that it recommended that the Committee of Ministers “allocate adequate financing from the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe to the three dimensions of the campaign until its end in November 2014 and to the Committee of the Parties of the Lanzarote Convention and its Secretariat thereafter.”

I would like to conclude my presentation by saying that politicians have a great role to play in making laws but also in working with all relevant actors of civil society for the prevention of sexual abuse of children. Members of the Network do not stop speaking and fighting for the improvement of the dignity of the children.

Thank you.

³ The bookmarks are at the disposal of participants.