

Intervention, RD Afshan Khan
CoE High-level Launching Conference for
the new Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)
3 mins – 372 wds

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting - and the adoption of your Strategy on the Rights of the Child for 2022 to 2027 - **could** not be more timely. With more than 7.5 million children affected by the war in Ukraine, more than 2 million children fleeing the violence into neighbouring countries, and many more displaced inside the country, the critical importance of a collective, strategic approach to protect and advance children's rights in Europe has seldom been more evident.

I want to congratulate you for the adoption of the Strategy. I also want to thank you for inviting UNICEF to participate in its launch. Our participation is a clear indication of the strength of the partnership between UNICEF and the European institutions. This partnership is helping children who are suffering right now, in real time. Children who need our help, and who have the **right to expect** our help.

In this regard, I want to highlight the inclusion in the Rome Strategy of a sixth priority area on 'children's rights in crisis and emergency situations'. Covering the protection of children affected by conflict, migration and forced displacement. Prioritizing this area has – unfortunately – proven to be prescient.

The war in Ukraine has led to a child protection crisis and countries neighbouring Ukraine and across Europe have had to re-examine provisions to protect children fleeing the conflict.

As needs increase, UNICEF will continue to support the valuable work carried out by the Council of Europe. I want to highlight in particular our collaboration through key Committees, such as the Lanzarote Committee and the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child.

I am particularly pleased to see that encouraging children's right to engage and express their views is an objective of this Strategy. With its adoption, child participation should become a natural part of all policy-making processes at all levels. This is in line with Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is doubly pleasing to understand that young people played an important part in the formation of the Strategy.

UNICEF is the custodian of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which underpins this Strategy. UNICEF is also the UN organization mandated to protect the rights of every child. Therefore, we very much look forward to working with the Secretariat of the Council of Europe to further strengthen the monitoring and implementation of children's rights. Please continue to look upon UNICEF as a ready and willing partner as you roll out this important Strategy.

Thank you.

(end)