Statement by Ms. Tatevik Stepanyan
Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia
at the High-level Launching Conference for the new CoE Strategy
for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)
"Beyond the horizon: a new era
for the rights of the child"

Excellences,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First, let me extend my gratitude to the Council of Europe and the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers for the invitation to the Conference, excellent organisation of the event and warm welcome.

Today, the geopolitical developments and global challenges seem to influence not only our immediate actions but our plans for tomorrow as well. Such important events are good occasions to focus on specific topics of global importance, in this case the rights of the child, in an in-depth manner, present our visions and reflect on the recent developments and challenges. They also serve as an efficient platform where we resolve to accelerate the implementation of our international commitments.

The protection of children's rights and ensuring their well-being must be the responsibility of all and universally considered as a noble contribution not only to their lives, but also to the sustainable development of our countries, and furthermore, to the evolvement of the humanity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The protection and promotion of children's rights is at the core of the state policy of the Republic of Armenia. A number of measures, including legislative reforms, have been implemented in this direction in the course of the past years. Today, state policy is being adjusted and improved even further to bring it in full compliance with our international obligations and commitments and in order to face new realities and challenges. In particular, the programs implemented within the framework of the state policy in the field of advancement and protection of children's rights are aimed at the physical, mental, emotional and moral development of children, thus striving to ensure equal opportunities and suitable conditions for their comprehensive social inclusion.

Giving utmost importance to protect and ensure the right of the child to live in a family, Armenia continues the process of deinstitutionalization of child-care institutions. In case of impossibility of reunification with the biological family, the family-type alternative care methods are being stimulated. As a result, 91 children currently receive care in foster families and about

6,000 children under the age of 14 are in guardian families. In Armenia, an average of 150 people wishing to adopt a child are registered annually.

In order to promote the right of a child to live in a family, the state, starting from 2020, had been delegating specialized services to non-governmental organizations, aiming at improvement of the quality of life of children in difficult situations. In 2021, about 4,000 children and their families benefited from the opportunity to be involved in these programs. Moreover, six day care centers with government support, provide needs-based services to 600 children and their families. The aim is to ensure children's access to services, their full inclusion in a high-quality educational process, as well as prevention of the risk of separation from the family.

I would like to underline that all of these programs also refer to children with disabilities. Currently, in cooperation with UNICEF, the delivered services are being enhanced to ensure their full accessibility.

Nothing should deviate us from the agenda of creating favorable conditions for the protection of children's rights. Despite the global COVID-19 pandemic and the military aggression unleashed by Azerbaijan against Nagorno Karabakh and its people in 2020, the government continues to undertake all possible steps to ensure that children maintain a normal life. The consolidated efforts by the state, local and international actors made it possible to mitigate the negative consequences of this double-crisis on children's lives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Only strong commitments of governments and political will to implement and support internationally recognized norms can guarantee the full enjoyment of human rights worldwide.

I look forward to interesting and productive deliberations, and I hope that this Conference will become an efficient platform for the participating States, international and civil society organizations and other stakeholders to join efforts aiming at our common desire to improve the well-being of our children.

I thank you.