

**“Beyond the horizon: a new era for the rights of the child”  
High-Level Launching Conference  
for the new Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)  
of the Council of Europe**

**Statement of Miss Francesca Di Giovanni  
Under Secretary of the Multilateral Affairs  
in the Section for Relations with States  
Rome, 7 April 2022**

Madame Secretary General, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Delegation of the Holy See is pleased to have the opportunity to intervene at this High-Level Conference, and thanks the Authorities of the Council of Europe and the Italian Presidency for their leadership.

In these troubled months, where millions of children and their families are suffering greatly all over Europe, the purpose of this conference is particularly timely and calls upon all of us to spare no effort in promoting the dignity of each child and their integral development.

The six thematic priorities contained in the *2022-2027 Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child* reflect this need and are worth reading in light of existing international instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and according to concepts and categories that are universally agreed. In that regard, the category “LGBTI children” referred to in the Strategy does not share international consensus and does not have an agreed definition. It is within this international framework that the Holy See welcomes the attention given to the right of children to protection in conflict zones as well as to child migration and forced displacement within priority No. 6, *Children’s rights in crisis and emergency situations*. In addition, we are confident that the results that will emerge from the analysis and response to the new challenges posed by COVID-19 (access to healthcare, guardianship of migrant and unaccompanied and separated children, detention, increased poverty, etc.) as foreseen in priority area No. 2, *Equal opportunities and social inclusion for all children*, will open the way to further concrete actions for those children who, in one way or another, are suffering from the consequences of the pandemic. In all cases, appropriate arrangements and measures are needed to ensure that the principle of the best interest of the child and the role of the family, as the fundamental group unit of society concerned with the protection and well-being of children and adolescents, are a primary consideration with regard to all decisions that have a fundamental impact on the life of the child.

The Strategy also hopes to achieve *Freedom from violence for all children* as indicated by priority No 1. In many ways, this affirms what many States have already recognized, namely that the prevention and protection from all forms of violence should

already be at the core of our common mission as we work together to promote and to affirm the rights of the child, as well as respect for the dignity and integrity of every child, in all that we do.

As those who have spoken before me, I would also like emphasize that the devastation caused by the war in Ukraine will have severe physical, psychological and moral impacts on the lives of millions of Ukrainian children. Additionally, let us not forget that this war will also have consequences for the rest of Europe's children.

We hope that it will not increase their fears and uncertainty but rather provide an opportunity to help them welcome their peers, educating them to the importance of solidarity and the possibility of peace.

In this regard, as Pope Francis has insisted, *“War does not devastate the present only, but the future of a society as well. [...] From the beginning of the aggression in Ukraine, one of every two children has been displaced from their country. This means destroying the future, causing dramatic trauma in the smallest and most innocent among us.”*<sup>1</sup>.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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<sup>1</sup> Francis, *Angelus*, Sunday, 27 March 2022.