Strasbourg, 16 November 2018

**Joint statement issued by**
**Andorra, Belgium, Luxembourg, Monaco and Slovenia**
**on the occasion of the fourth edition of the European Day on the**
**Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (18 November)**
**and supported by 37 other member states**




*List of the 37 member states aligned with the joint statement issued by Andorra, Luxembourg, Monaco and Slovenia: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine.*

On 18 November, the Council of Europe celebrates the European Day for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

Unfortunately, this problem persists. About one in five children in Europe are victims of some form of sexual violence before reaching the age of 18. This phenomenon is all the more alarming because, in the vast majority of cases, children are victims of people from their circle of trust.

The theme of the 2018 edition of the European Day is "*the protection of children against sexual abuse in sport.*"

While sport is very beneficial for children and carries fundamental values, it can also involve specific hazards. First, children are in the presence of coaches or adults who influence them. Moreover, it creates risk situations, especially in locker rooms or during travel. Finally, an inequality situation between girls and boys and a culture of tolerance for physical suffering in sport can lead to the trivialization of inadmissible and traumatic practices.

Shame, guilt and sometimes fear, often lead an abused child to remain silent and in despair, sometimes for many years.

Therefore, it is essential that adults create a safe, rewarding and protective sporting environment for children. It is up to parents, coaches, sports associations and states to prevent abuse, protect children and help fight impunity.

In this perspective, we support the Council of Europe's Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021), including the priority area pursuing the goal of building a life free of violence for all children. We recall the commitments of the Member States as set out in the Guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children against violence adopted on 18 November 2009 at the 1070th bis meeting of the Committee of Ministers (Recommendation CM/REC(2009)10).

We welcome the success of the two Pro Safe Sport projects and the "Start to talk" initiative launched this year by the Council of Europe which specifically invites adults to give their voice to children to break the silence.

To respond to this call, we invite all States to launch this initiative at a national level and in particular:

- take concrete measures to prevent and respond to abuse,
- to put in place or improve protection frameworks, and
- organise training sessions or workshops on safe sport.

We also thank the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse for its important work and encourage all States to accede to the Lanzarote Convention.

Sport must be a source of fulfilment for children and a vector of values essential for life in society. Accordingly, we strongly reaffirm our commitment to making the Council of Europe standards fully effective to develop a safe sporting environment, eradicate the causes of such violence and put an end to impunity.