

**Distinguished Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues, Young Delegates,**

I am honored to take part in this discussion on the rights of the child and their implementation in the years to come. The enforcement of the rights of the child and families with children has already been a major challenge in peaceful democratic European society. It is much greater challenge today, as the war has changed the lives of thousands of children and families overnight. Children are without a doubt the most vulnerable in this context. Today, however, thanks to this long-planned meeting, we have a great opportunity to respond to the situation in time and with all due respect to the rights of the child.

Although the current crisis leads us to address the situation of children afflicted by the war as a matter of priority, we should not forget the long-term unresolved aims. Shortcomings in the legal protection system, inconsistencies in the implementation of some previously adopted measures or outright absence of effective solutions (for example, in dealing with domestic violence or approach to children in police investigations or the judiciary). Interdisciplinary cooperation is certainly necessary in promoting safe and dignified living conditions for children and families, especially in the areas of education, health care and stable housing. The crisis is forcing us to reconsider, readjust or resolve many of these things. It can be an opportunity to break the ice where we have made no real progress for years.

Great emphasis is placed on children's participation. Children and their families are considered key players in solving their family situation. They should have a strong and equal voice in the needs assessment process and their input is the key to identify the necessary steps to promote the rights of the child. It is essential to have sufficient capacity and tools that fully respect the views and wishes of the child.

Crisis and emergency situations place even greater demands on the consistent and rapid fulfilment of the goals in response to the acute needs of children. In an effort to ensure safety and basic childcare, it is not possible to ignore the child's right to identity, privacy, maintaining ties with family or loved ones, the right to education and the support of professional services. The horrific experience these children go through will

be followed in quick succession by a number of other changes, such as adaptation to a new environment, learning a foreign language and making new friends. Many experts from many different fields will be needed to help at least partially cope with the often irreversible damage to the child's soul.

Given that the Czech Republic is very actively involved in resolving the current crisis, it should be noted that:

- The Czech Republic's priorities are fully in line with the Council of Europe's Strategy on the Rights of the Child.
- Fundamental attention is focused on the priority of promoting children's rights in crisis and emergency situations.
- In the context of the Ukrainian crisis, increased attention needs to be paid to the families of children and children facing extreme poverty, children at risk of violence, abuse or severe neglect, or children deprived of their own family environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention and for the possibility to share our experience with you. I believe that the new Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child will be a strong and efficient tool to support children's right all over Europe.