Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Principality of Monaco and the Council of Europe for the excellent organization and warm hospitality.

For me, returning to Monaco has a very special personal meaning.

Years ago, right here in Monte Carlo, I had the great honour of receiving the prestigious Silver Clown award, presented to me personally by Princess Stéphanie.

Back then, I came here as a performer. Today, I return as Bulgaria's Minister of Youth and Sports.

But one thing has never changed — my belief in the power of sport, talent, and hard work.

Today, we are discussing a very important issue: how to make sport safer and healthier for our children.

As someone who has dedicated a large part of my life to sport, I know how much it can give to a child.

Sport builds character, discipline, confidence, and teaches respect.

But sport must be a place where children feel protected and safe. A place where their dreams grow, not where they are broken.

In Bulgaria, one of our main priorities is to involve more children to choose sport.

We are working to increase physical activity in schools, including bringing back daily morning exercises.

But I strongly believe one thing:

It is not enough simply to bring children into sports facilities. We must make sure they are in safe hands.

Bulgaria was the first partner country to develop a national roadmap under the Council of Europe's Start to Talk project, focused on protecting children in sport.

Sports federations, public institutions, organizations, and young people themselves have been involved in this process.

Our goal is to make clear rules and effective protection mechanisms at every level - from national federations to the smallest sports clubs.

We already have positive examples.

The Bulgarian Football Union has introduced child safeguarding requirements as part of its club licensing system.

The Bulgarian Athletics Federation has adopted rules and procedures to protect athletes and respond to violations.

And the Bulgarian Rhythmic Gymnastics Federation actively supports initiatives against violence towards children.

These are important steps, but there is still much work ahead.

Because children's safety must not exist only on paper. It must be a reality in every training session, every sports facility, and every relationship between a coach and an athlete.

Dear colleagues,

I believe that regardless of which country we represent, we share one common responsibility:

To give children not only the opportunity to participate in sport, but also the chance to grow up healthy, confident, and protected.

I would like to finish with something I personally believe in:

Not every child who enters a sports hall will become a champion. But every child deserves to leave it stronger, more confident, and a better person.

This is our responsibility.

And this must be our common goal.

Thank you for your attention!