



UNICEF Executive Board session New York, 13 September 2011

Speech by Maud de Boer-Buquicchio Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Madame President, Executive Director of UNICEF, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I wish to thank you very much for having reserved a slot in your very busy agenda for an exchange with me. In my brief remarks, I shall try to answer to some of the questions and thoughts that may cross your minds right now.

To the first question: Why are we spending our precious time in discussing with the Council of Europe?

My answer is: because our two organisations share the same values and the vision of a world fit for children and the Council of Europe can help UNICEF to achieve its crucial mission through global advocacy and action on the ground.

As you certainly know, the Council of Europe was founded in 1949 to protect and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Over these 62 years, we have developed a number of highly effective tools which are shaping the democratic institutions, the laws and the policies of our member States. You may be interested in the Council of Europe capacity to develop standards and policies in the field of children's rights, to monitor progress, to assist countries with the needed changes and to influence public opinion and attitudes towards children.

Since our Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2005, Children's rights have become a political priority for our Organisation, inspiring the launching of our programme "Building a Europe for and with children". Developing our co-operation with UNICEF was one of the first natural steps we made, through the signature of a joint declaration in 2007.

Some of you may now be thinking: Oh, yes, this has to be interesting for Europe. Why should other regions care?

The Council of Europe is indeed a regional organisation made "only" of 47 member States. Our natural partners for our work are of course UNICEF offices in the region. We are particularly happy with the results of our cooperation with the UNICEF CEE/CIS Regional Office. The Council of Europe and Mr Steven Allen's team are joining hands in the identification of priorities for the region. UNICEF field offices are precious partners for the Council of Europe action at national level.

The Conference that we co-organised this year in Kyiv, in the framework of the Ukrainian presidency of our Committee of Ministers is a perfect example.

But neither Europe, nor other Continent can today afford ignoring the rest of the world or pretend it can solve its own problems without looking at or caring for what is happening elsewhere. Most of the challenges that the Council of Europe is addressing are worldwide challenges. The tools we are using have therefore become universal tools. As for your computer when you travel: you may need an adapter to switch it to the power. But it works!

Let me give you an example:

The Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (the Lanzarote Convention) is the most ambitious and comprehensive legal instrument now available in this field. It takes as a starting point the most relevant UN standards, bringing them further to cover all possible kinds of sexual violence and describing in detail the measures that need to be taken to prevent it, to protect the children and to prosecute the offenders. This Convention is open to any country in the world. And we are joining hands with the UN family to promote its ratification worldwide so that, together, we can put an end to this scourge affecting millions of children worldwide. This was reflected in the call launched by the World Congress III against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents held in Rio in 2008.

Our guidelines for the development of national integrated strategies for the protection of children from violence against children is another text that can inspire other regions and countries outside Europe. A text that we have designed with the precious help of Ms Marta Santos Pais to support her important mandate.

To give you another example, I could refer to the Child-friendly Justice Guidelines adopted by the Council of Europe in 2010. The upcoming Conference organised by the Africa Child Policy Forum on "Deprivation of Children's Liberty as the Last Resort", to be held in Kampala in November this year is a marvellous platform which will launch the preparation of such guidelines for the African Continent based on what the Council of Europe has done

The Council of Europe is now developing a new neighbourhood policy. Countries emerging from the "Arab Spring" are turning to us to request assistance in the building of democratic institutions. It is important that the international community lends its support to these countries in a coordinated and efficient way. The Council of Europe is ready to play its part in an international team work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Council of Europe conventions, policies, training packs, campaigns and other products are tools that UNICEF can use and promote. UNICEF can be the "adapter" that makes these tools work outside Europe as well.

But now you may be wondering: if Council of Europe work has this potential, can we influence what the Council of Europe is doing?

My answer is: OF COURSE!

UNICEF is already involved in practically all the Council of Europe work related to children. A few examples:

You have helped us with the design of our guidelines on child friendly justice on child friendly social services and on child friendly health care. UNICEF is heavily involved in our work on child participation. Thanks to UNICEF, the most recent Council of Europe conventions contain carefully thought provisions related to children. UNICEF participates in our meetings, provides precious input in the drafting of our legal and policy instruments, the preparation of our multiannual strategies, the design of our campaigns. UNICEF also advises our teams working at national level.

I said earlier that UNICEF could work as the “adapter” for our computer to work. But UNICEF can do much more than that. It can (and should) be at the heart of our processor, in the microchips, in the wires, in the connections. We could actually put a sticker to all Council of Europe work guaranteeing “UNICEF inside”.

And we are grateful and proud of it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By now, I hope that I have convinced you of the importance of our partnership. Our two organisations are now programming for the years to come. You may feel like asking: What can we do together in the years to come?

At the Council of Europe, we are currently developing a new Strategy for the period 2012-2015, where the intention is to provide guidance, advice and technical assistance to member states in the implementation of existing standards. The Strategy sets out the following thematic areas for priority action:

- ❖ child-friendly health care and social services;
- ❖ violence against children (including sexual violence, corporal punishment, domestic violence, violence in schools, cyberspace);
- ❖ safeguarding vulnerable children (alternative care, detention, migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced children, and children with disabilities), and
- ❖ promoting child participation at local, national and international level, including through education in democratic citizenship and human rights education.

Cooperation with UNICEF in the preparation and implementation of the next strategy is not only very welcome but essential to make sure that we join efforts in the search for complementarity in our actions, while simultaneously managing to promote both our organisations’ standards. The previous UNICEF Executive Director, Ms Ann Venemann, paid a visit to the Council of Europe in 2007 and signed the joint declaration which has allowed us to strengthen our cooperation in the most meaningful of ways. Mr Anthony Lake has a standing invitation to Strasbourg to address our Committee of Ministers and we hope this will happen early next year.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

At this point in time, I think there is an important question that you may not dare to put: WHEN ARE WE GOING TO HAVE LUNCH?

My answer is: You decide! I am very grateful for your attention and your time. I have tried to anticipate some of your questions but I am of course ready to answer to any other you may have.

Thank you.