

**UNICEF Statement at Council of Europe  
Conference on Violence Against Children**

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**Introduction**

Honorable participants, I would like to begin with congratulating the Council of Europe for organizing this important event that will address concerns of essential importance for the protection of children and their rights.

The Council of Europe Policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence and the UNICEF Child Protection Strategy issued in 2008 are in great harmony and reinforce each other.

The vision and approach of UNICEF is to create a protective environment where girls and boys are free from violence, exploitation, and unnecessary separation from family; and where laws, services, behaviours and practices minimize children's vulnerability, address known risk factors, and strengthen children's own resilience.

The UNICEF overarching strategic intent is to strengthen national protection systems, supporting capacity through the core responsibilities of the social welfare and justice sectors, as well as through other relevant sectors. It is to support as well positive social change, mobilizing communities, partners and children themselves to reinforce a culture of child protection in all societies. And to strengthen child protection in conflict and emergencies.

As stressed in the Council of Europe guidelines, child protection begins with prevention. The emphasis is on reliable responses to situations where protection has broken down or does not exist. In this regard, child-sensitive approaches to social protection can make a major contribution: the renewed emphasis of UNICEF on upstream policy advocacy work to protect children against violence aims to intensify attention paid to children within national social protection systems and among international development actors. National frameworks that give children access to justice are also essential.

The adoption of the CP strategy meant that UNICEF shifted its focus away from ad-hoc responses to a more comprehensive approach of supporting change in social and institutional environments. Supporting sustained national capacities for child protection is by definition a scaling-up strategy. Greater coordination among partners on the ground and among sectors is needed for the design and implementation of such strategies.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me illustrate this approach with two recent initiatives:

UNICEF, jointly with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Violence against Children are organizing a high-level event on 25 May 2010 to launch a two year global campaign to achieve universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography by the 10th anniversary of their entry into force in 2012.

In September 2009 at the initiative of President Bill Clinton, five UN organisations (UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM, WHO), the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, and some private sector partners launched a partnership to address Sexual Violence against Girls. The aim of the partnership is to create a sustainable global movement to combat and prevent sexual violence against girls. It aims at strengthening country level data through national surveys in order to better understand the extent and nature of the issue and to provide a benchmark for monitoring; and strengthening country level policy and programme responses to prevent and respond to sexual violence against

girls. The objective is also to bring attention and appropriate action to this problem globally through advocacy, public private partnerships and communication and to mobilize resources for the response at a country level.

At country level, UNICEF is working to strengthen formal and informal child protection systems and to address social norms that perpetuate gender stereotyping and discrimination.

As a few examples: Tanzania has completed the first phase of data collection and analysis on violence against children and Kenya is about to embark on a similar survey. A number of countries throughout Asia and Africa have expressed interest in joining the initiative either by initiating new data collection and analysis activities, investigating the quality of existing research or in moving directly to strengthen the programme response.

The Council of Europe guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence represent an excellent starting point for implementing the recommendations of the UN report on violence against children. In UNICEF we are proud of our long-term partnership on a number of essential child protection issues with the Council of Europe and in particular with the Council of Europe programme “Building a Europe for and with Children”. We are contributing to the drafting of the guidelines on child-friendly justice, in particular through facilitation the consultation of children in Eastern and Central Europe, and we are committed to support the development of guidance on child-friendly social services.

We see this conference and its outcomes as a beginning of a global agenda which resonates strongly with our global child protection strategy. We would like here to commend the role that the UN SG Special Representative on Violence against Children plays and will continue to play in ensuring that governments' commitments are matched with action and effective results. We are fully confident that our collaboration with Marta Santos-Pais will build on positive lessons learned from our fruitful collaboration with the SRSG on Children and Armed Conflict.

With field presence in 21 countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and national committees in most Western countries, UNICEF is looking forward to working with governments in the implementation of the Council of Europe strategies and international child rights standards. We work in a region where reforms are still necessary. In the Eastern part of Europe, child care systems continue to institutionalize thousands of children rather than focusing their efforts in preventing family break-up and baby abandonment; to put children in institutions as a one-size-fit-all solution due to insufficient development of community-based services and alternative care for children when separation could not be prevented. As demonstrated by the recent advocacy visit conducted with Mr. Robert Badinter in Ukraine and Moldova, justice systems in many parts of Europe are still not serving children or society well, and in many instances cannot fairly claim to be delivering justice. There is a need to better articulate the basic aims of juvenile justice – namely, that before adulthood, emphasis needs to be placed on assisting a young person to avoid behavior that will bring him or her in further conflict with the law, as opposed to punishing him or her for an offence committed.

Finally, we would like to recognize the importance of the strategies chosen by the Council of Europe for moving ahead in protecting children from all forms of violence. We are looking forward for an early engagement on the preparation of the forthcoming conference focusing on Central and Eastern Europe and the Community of Independent States.

Thank you!