

# High Level Cross-Regional Meeting on the Protection of Children from Sexual Violence



Concept Note and  
Programme

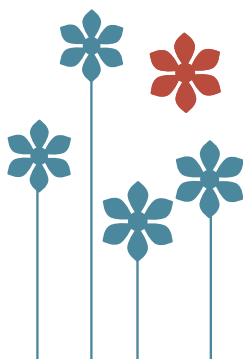
Palais de l'Europe  
Room 9  
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18-19 June 2015



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



## Introduction

Acting as a bridge-builder between regions, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children (SRSG) convenes each year a Cross-Regional Meeting (CRM) on violence against children. This important annual forum enables regional organizations and institutions to assess progress achieved, reflect on trends and common concerns, share planned initiatives and identify opportunities for cross-regional cooperation. The CRM allows regional organizations from across the globe to mutually support progress in fighting violence against children and serves as an ideal platform for sharing legal and other implementation initiatives promoted to fight violence against children.

At the last CRM (Jamaica, 2014), the Council of Europe offered to host the 2015 Cross-Regional Meeting in Strasbourg and it was agreed that the thematic focus be on the elimination of sexual violence against children.

The meeting will be divided into **two parts**.

The **first part** will be an open meeting devoted to the thematic discussion on the prevention and elimination of sexual abuse and exploitation of children. The objective is to facilitate a discussion and exchange between regional organisations on strategies, policy frameworks, legislation, good practices and challenges in their respective regions. This exchange will benefit from the contribution from international experts, including experts working in regional bodies such as the Lanzarote Committee, in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (the Lanzarote Convention) and the Cybercrime Convention Committee, in charge of evaluating the implementation of the Council of Europe Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.

The **second part** of the meeting will be a Round Table open to representatives of regional organisations only, allowing them to update, exchange information and report on progress in the follow-up to the UN Study on Violence against Children.

## Preventing and eliminating sexual violence against children. Thematic debate.

Following consultations with the representatives from the various regions, three topics have been identified for an in-depth discussion.

### Thematic session I: Sexual abuse of children in the circle of trust

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Adopted in 2007, the Lanzarote Convention is the most ambitious and comprehensive legal instrument on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. It takes as a starting point the relevant United Nations and Council of Europe standards, extending them to cover all possible kinds of sexual offences against children (including sexual abuse of a child, child prostitution, child pornography, grooming and corruption of children through exposure to sexual content and activities) and criminalising them. It covers sexual abuse within the family or close social surroundings of the child as well as sexual exploitation for commercial or profit-making purposes. It sets forth that States in Europe and beyond, shall establish specific legislation and take measures with an emphasis on keeping the best interest of the child at the forefront, to prevent sexual violence but also to protect child victims and prosecute perpetrators. It also promotes international cooperation to achieve the same objectives. The Lanzarote Convention provisions have inspired changes in legislation and policies in countries in Europe and beyond.

Before the adoption of the Lanzarote Convention, international instruments tackled sexual violence against children with a particular focus on acts associated with commercial aims (prostitution, pornography, trafficking). As emerging data indicated the important prevalence of sexual abuse particularly by persons close to the victim<sup>1</sup>, it became clear during the negotiations of this treaty that it was essential to broaden the approach to ensure a more comprehensive and better protection of children against sexual violence.

The Lanzarote Convention requires States to explicitly criminalise sexual abuse of children when abuse is made of a recognised position of trust, authority or influence over the child, including within the family; or when abuse is made of a particularly vulnerable situation of the child, notably because of a mental or physical disability or a situation of dependence. This kind of abuse is considered a crime regardless of whether the adult abuses the child recurring to coercion, force

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1. See Lanzarote Convention Explanatory Report, paras. 123-125. Also highlighted by recent UN reports, including from UNICEF (Hidden in Plain Sight, 2014) and WHO (Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014)

or threat and notwithstanding the fact that the child has already reached the legal age for sexual activities.

■ The Lanzarote Committee decided to dedicate its first monitoring round to “the protection of children against sexual abuse in the circle of trust”. By June 2015, the Lanzarote Committee should complete the first part of its assessment of the situation in 26 States Parties with respect to this theme. The first part of the monitoring round focuses on the legal and judicial framework in place to protect children against sexual abuse in the circle of trust. The second part of the monitoring round (in 2016 and 2017) will assess the measures, policies and strategies put in place to prevent and protect children from sexual abuse in the circle of trust.

■ This session is therefore aimed at introducing the relevant provisions of the Lanzarote Convention with regard to sexual abuse, sharing the first outcomes of the Lanzarote Committee’s monitoring work on this and learning from other regions of the world about the challenges they are encountering and the good practices that help to prevent and protect children from the crime of sexual abuse.

## **Thematic session II: Protection of children from sexual abuse through information and communication technologies**

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■ It is estimated that on average, one third of children have had access to the Internet in the past five years. Although there are significant variations among regions, the global trend shows that more and more children use information and communication technologies (ICTs). Facilitated by the fast development of mobile technology, the reach of the Internet is growing at a dizzying rate. The average time that children are spending on the Internet continues to grow and the age at which they embrace technology is decreasing.

■ Information and communication technologies represent an amazing opportunity that more and more children are using to learn, play, create, socialize, seek advice and express themselves, in particular through the Internet. Unfortunately, ICTs are also associated with risks and harm, exposing children to violent or harmful content, cyber-bullying, grooming by sexual predators, abuse and exploitation, in particular through the production and distribution of child sexual abuse and exploitation material or live web streaming. The quantification and identification of cases remains a challenge due to the possibility of concealing illegal activities on the Internet.

■ Creating a safe online environment for children implies developing a range of responses that strike the appropriate balance between maximizing the potential of new technologies to promote and protect children’s rights while minimizing the risks and ensuring children’s safety.

■ In order to be effective, the means, resources and ways in which on-line violence is tackled must keep pace with technological developments. States' action is crucial to provide children with a safe access to ICTs as well as to prevent and respond to incidents of abuse and exploitation. For instance, laws need to be adopted which criminalise new types of harmful and exploitative behaviour. Similarly, there is a major role to be played by the business sector through awareness-raising and the development of technology to facilitate the reporting of abuse, support the investigation of cases and the identification of victims and perpetrators. More research is needed to understand the way in which children engage with ICTs, the factors that determine children's resilience when confronted with risks and harm, the impact of continued exposure to harmful material and factors that influence the demand for child sexual abuse material.

■ The session will explore ways to further exploit the potential of the various international and regional standards, platforms and initiatives to converge in the promotion of an empowering, inclusive and safe digital agenda for children.

### **Thematic Session III: Strengthening international cooperation for the protection of children from sexual violence**

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■ Over the past years, the increased awareness of the imperative to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation has triggered the enhancement of international standards, mechanisms, platforms and campaigns that, in turn, are playing a crucial role in supporting States in their efforts to prevent and address sexual violence against children.

■ Today, much progress is prompted thanks to a number of universal conventions such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, as well as the ILO Convention 182 on The Worst Forms of Child Labour. Treaties and other international legal texts adopted at regional level further complement this global effort. Examples include the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Maputo Protocol, the Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Inter-American Conventions on International Traffic in Minors and on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, the EU Directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography and the Council of Europe Conventions on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, on Cybercrime, on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Both universal and regional instruments offer unique platforms for reflection, implementation and joint action.

■ Since 1996, the urgency of addressing the sexual exploitation of children has gained renewed attention thanks to the process launched with the first World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, hosted by Sweden in Stockholm in cooperation with UNICEF and ECPAT. Almost 20 years later, the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action remain of full actuality and have been enriched with further political commitments and translated into effective action across nations.

■ In 2006, the UN Secretary-General Study on Violence against Children marked another turning point in the international community's awareness of the right to the child to freedom from violence. The development of the Study and its process of follow-up triggered an unprecedented mobilisation at international, regional and national levels for the elimination of all forms of violence against children. Over the past decade, the Study has generated an unstoppable movement that continues to gain ground thanks to the commitment of national governments and parliaments, independent child rights institutions, international and regional organizations, religious leaders, civil society, the corporate sector, and the passion and initiatives of millions of children and adults around the world.

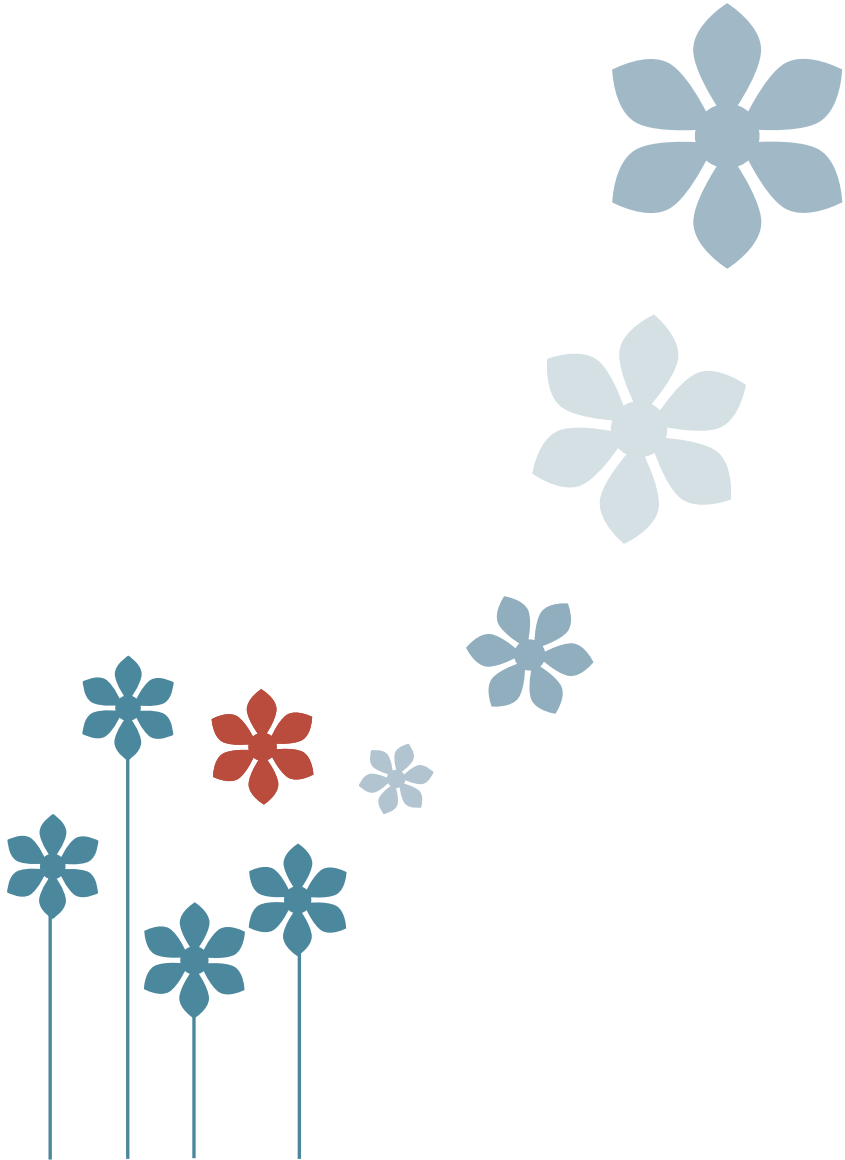
■ The role played by regional organisations and institutions to ensure follow-up to the recommendations of the UN Study has been critical, triggering and supporting action at national level and facilitating the much-needed international cooperation.

■ Children's experiences, views and recommendations for the prevention and elimination of violence are also gaining renewed visibility and impact at all levels. Over 800.000 children participated in the consultations leading to the preparation of the Post-2015 global development agenda. Their message has been clear: "Violence is a major obstacle to child development and it urgently needs to be brought to an end!" This is also a priority concern expressed by governments across regions. Stopping violence against children needs to be preserved as a crucial priority in the Post 2015 agenda, and a cross cutting concern that other development goals need to address – especially those related to education, health, gender equality and poverty eradication.

■ As the international community moves forward in the shaping of the Post 2015 global development agenda, the voice and influence of regional organizations and national governments is decisively needed to promote an agenda that is solidly anchored in international human rights standards, that genuinely bridges development and children's rights concerns, and is visibly guided by the best interests of the child.

■ 2016 will mark the start of the implementation of the next Global Sustainable Development Goals, the 20th anniversary of the Stockholm Congress and the 10th

anniversary of the UN Study. During the session devoted to international cooperation, regional organizations and institutions participating in the 2015 Cross-Regional Round Table on Violence against Children are invited to explore ways to seize these opportunities and to further strengthen international platforms, processes and initiatives to accelerate progress towards a childhood free from all forms of violence, including sexual violence.



# PROGRAMME

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## High-level Cross-Regional Meeting on the Protection of Children from Sexual Violence

### Wednesday 17 June

Arrival of participants in Strasbourg

- 17.45 Viewing of the film "To Kill a Kelpie" followed by a debate with Matthew McVarish, actor, playwright and activist against sexual abuse of children  
Council of Europe, Palais de l'Europe, Cinema room

### Thursday 18 June

- 08.45 Registration
- 09.15 Official opening
- ▶ **Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni**, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe
  - ▶ **Ms Marta Santos Pais**, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children
  - ▶ **Ms Maud de Boer-Buquicchio**, UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
- Moderator: **Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković**, Director General of Democracy, Council of Europe



10.00

## **THEMATIC SESSION I:**

### **Sexual abuse of children in the circle of trust**

#### **Insight of European countries' responses to sexual abuse in the circle of trust**

Moderator: **Ms Regína Jensdóttir**, Head of Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe

#### ***Presentation of the Lanzarote Committee's approach to "sexual abuse in the circle of trust" and of the initial findings of its monitoring work on this theme***

- ▶ **Ms Ksenija Turković**, Judge of the European Court of Human Rights
- ▶ **Mr Bragi Guðbrandsson**, Chair of the Lanzarote Committee

Debate

10.45

Coffee break

11.15

#### **Strategies and good practices for the protection of children from sexual violence in the circle of trust**

Moderator: **Mr Matthew McVarish**, actor, playwright and activist against sexual abuse of children

#### ***From denial to informed action: the importance of investing in research, capacity building and awareness raising***

- ▶ **Mr Théoplane Nikyèma**, Executive Director, The African Child Policy Forum
- ▶ **Mr Jorge Freyre**, Member of the Latin-American and Caribbean Movement for Children, Regional Advocacy Director, Save the children LAC

#### ***Safe and child sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms***

- ▶ **Mr Manus de Barra**, Child Protection Specialist, Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on violence against children, United Nations

#### ***Challenges in providing child-friendly justice and treatment for child victims of sexual abuse in the circle of trust***

- ▶ **Ms Gordana Buljan-Flander**, Director of the Child Protection Center of Zagreb, Croatia

***An integrated approach to the elimination of sexual violence: lessons learnt in the Netherlands***

- ▶ **Ms Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen**, Dutch Rapporteur on trafficking in human beings and sexual violence against children

Debate

13.00 Lunch

14.30 **THEMATIC SESSION II :**  
**Protection of children from sexual abuse through information and communication technologies (ICTs)**

Moderator: **Ms Alicia Bala**, Deputy Secretary General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation, Socio-Cultural Community

***Connecting with children's and young people's wishes and expectations***

- ▶ **Mr Niels Baas**, Communication Researcher at the University of Twente, The Netherlands, and founder of Cyberpesten de Baas

***Maximizing opportunities and minimizing risks through empowerment and participation***

- ▶ **Ms Milena Grillo**, Executive Director, Paniamor Foundation, Costa Rica

***Research and findings from the ROBERT project on online behaviour related to child sexual abuse.***

- ▶ **Ms Turid Heiberg**, Head of the Children at Risk Unit, Council of the Baltic Sea States

***Solicitation of children for sexual purposes through ICTs: Presentation of the Opinion of the Lanzarote Committee on Article 23 of the Lanzarote Convention***

- ▶ **Mr Erik Planken**, Dutch Member of the Lanzarote Committee

Debate

16.00 Coffee break

16.15 **Continuation of thematic session II**

Moderator: **Ms Maud de Boer-Buquicchio**, UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

### ***Fighting sexual exploitation of children at national level***

- ▶ **Mr Geronimo Sy**, Assistant Minister of Justice, Philippines
- ▶ **Mr Steve Grocki**, Deputy Chief, Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section of the Criminal Division of Department of Justice, USA

### ***International collaboration in victim identification and online child sexual exploitation***

- ▶ **Mr Robert Shilling**, Coordinator of INTERPOL's Operations Crimes against Children, Acting Assistant Director Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation

### ***Promoting public and private partnerships and cybersecurity for children***

- ▶ **Mr Howard Schmidt**, former Cybersecurity advisor to Presidents Bush and Obama, Co-Founder Ridge Schmidt Cyber, Executive Director SAFECode, USA

Debate

18.00 Closing of day one

18.15 Reception in the Foyer of the Committee of Ministers, Palais de l'Europe

### ***Presentation of ENOC exhibition "Austerity Bites; Children's Voices"***

## **Friday 19 June**

09.00 **THEMATIC SESSION III:**

### **Opportunities for strengthening international co-operation for the protection of children from sexual violence**

Moderator: **Ms Marta Santos Pais**, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children

### ***Exploring the role and potential of existing platforms to promote a safe, empowering and inclusive digital agenda for children***

- ▶ **Ms Clara Sommarin**, Child Protection Specialist Exploitation and Violence, UNICEF
- ▶ **Ms Verónica Donoso**, Executive Director, International Association of Internet Hotlines – INHOPE

► **Ms Janice Richardson**, Senior advisor, ENABLE coordinator, European Schoolnet

► **Ms Claire Cody**, Research Fellow, International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking, University of Bedfordshire, United Kingdom

***The Stockholm World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children +20: lessons learnt in the fight against sexual exploitation of children and vision for the future***

► **Ms Dorothy Rozga**, Executive Director, ECPAT International

Debate

11.00 Coffee break

11.15 Closing remarks

► **Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković**, Director General of Democracy, Council of Europe

► **Ms Marta Santos Pais**, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children



# 5th High-Level Cross-Regional Round Table on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Children (restricted)

12.00 Tour-de table: Regional update and exchange

Moderator: **Mr Benyam Dawit Mezmur**, Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Vice-Chairperson of the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Focal-Point on Violence against Children

***Report on progress achieved in the elimination of violence against children since the Jamaica Round Table Meeting 2014, in particular on early childhood, good parenting and alternative care***

13.00 Lunch

14.30 A vision for 2016 and beyond

Moderator: **Ms Marta Santos Pais**, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children

***Placing violence against children at the heart of the future Global Sustainable Development Agenda***

16.00 Coffee break

16.15 The 10th Anniversary of the UN Global Study on violence against children: for a sustained, effective and coordinated global effort to accelerate and scale up progress towards a world free from violence against children.

Organisation of the Cross-Regional Meeting in 2016

18.00 Conclusion and closing

