Parliaments united in combating sexual violence against children

Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children

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Around the world, sexual violence against children remains pervasive, hidden and concealed. It affects millions of children and it happens in all contexts, even where children are expected to be safe and protected. In addition to the human cost to child victims, it also has an important economic cost to society. Protecting children from all forms of violence, including sexual abuse and exploitation, is an ethical and legal imperative, a question of good governance and it makes economic sense.

Despite its pervasiveness, sexual violence remains underreported. The reality is that in most countries, safe, accessible and child sensitive counseling and reporting mechanisms are simply non-existent; and when they have been set up, they often lack the resources and skills to support children’s healing and reintegration.

In view of its sensitive nature, sexual violence is a difficult topic to survey. And yet, data and evidence are needed to inform policies and monitor progress across regions.

The Council of Europe Lanzarote Convention is the most ambitious and comprehensive international legal instrument for the prevention and elimination of sexual violence against children and has become a sound global reference, inspiring legislation and policies in Europe and beyond. The outstanding support of the Parliamentary Assembly to its ratification and implementation has played a major role in raising awareness and promoting the use of this treaty. I am very pleased that, thanks to the Cross-Regional meeting we are having these days in Strasbourg, regional organisations from around the globe can benefit from this important experience and help us secure a world where all children can grow up free from violence and abuse.
Network of contact parliamentarians

**News: 24th network meeting, Strasbourg**

Debate on “Treatment of child sex offenders”

The network of contact parliamentarians to stop sexual violence against children will hold a meeting on Thursday, 25 June 2015 from 8.30 a.m. to 10 a.m. during the third part-session of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. The debate will begin with an in camera joint meeting (8.30 a.m. to 9 a.m.) of the network with the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, during which the parliamentarians will discuss the future of the network.

The discussion on “Treatment of child sex offenders” will be introduced by Ms Eleni Karayianni, PsyD, Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Clinical Training Co-ordinator, Department of Psychology, University of Cyprus. Council of Europe Deputy Secretary General, Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, will give her usual update on the ONE in FIVE Campaign.

**Latest events: 23rd network meeting, Chişinău**

On 20 May 2015, the network of contact parliamentarians held its external meeting on “Strategies and mechanisms to protect children from sexual abuse, trafficking and sexual exploitation” in Chişinău (Republic of Moldova). A thematic introduction was given by Ms Sevinj Fataliyeva, General Rapporteur on Children of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Mr Johan van den Hout, Thematic Spokesperson on Children of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

As sexual abuse, trafficking and sexual exploitation affect the lives of children in an extremely negative manner, it is important to create environments where the sexual exploitation of young people is unacceptable. Representatives of the Moldovan authorities (government, parliament, local and regional authorities), as well as international experts and NGOs held an exchange of views on good practices and national strategies to protect children and on promoting close co-operation between the different stakeholders in combating sexual violence against children. Following the speech by Ms Sigrid Richter-Unger, Executive board member of the German Society for Prevention and Intervention in cases of Child Abuse and Neglect (DGfPI) (Germany), they debated laws, policies and practices to protect children from sexual abuse. Ms Bharti Patel, Chief Executive Officer of ECPAT (United Kingdom), discussed the fundamental right...
of children to be free from the threats of trafficking, abuse and exploitation, as well as
the main challenges and means of fighting these phenomena.

22nd network meeting, Strasbourg

On 23 April 2015, the network of contact parliamentarians held a joint meeting with the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media on “Sex and relationship education as a means of preventing sexual violence against children”. The discussion was opened by Dr Attila Andics, teacher trainer, psychologist and brain researcher from the Academy of Sciences – Eötvös University Budapest (Hungary) and Ms Sanderijn van der Doef, Technical Advisor on the Sexual Health of Young People and Children, RutgersWPF (the Netherlands). The participants exchanged their views on this subject and discussed the importance of sexual education in the healthy development of children and in protecting them from sexual abuse.

European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

On 12 May 2015, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe took a decision to establish a European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, following the proposal made by the PACE in its Recommendation 2045 (2014) on combating sexual violence against children: towards a successful conclusion of the ONE in FIVE Campaign.

The European Day will be marked on 18 November in member states of the Council of Europe through awareness-raising activities with the strong involvement of civil society.

UN Cross-Regional Meeting on violence against children in Strasbourg

Ms Sevinj Fataliyeva, General Rapporteur on Children of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, will take part in the United Nations Cross-Regional Meeting (CRM) on violence against children in Strasbourg from 18 to 19 June 2015. This year the Council of Europe will host the CRM and concentrate on three thematic sessions: sexual abuse of children in the circle of trust, protection of children from sexual abuse through information and communication technologies, and strengthening international co-operation for the protection of children from sexual violence. The CRM is an excellent opportunity for experts to share information about their initiatives and programmes to prevent sexual abuse of children and to reflect on new strategies to protect children from violence.
Lanzarote Convention

Czech Republic

The Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic voted in favour of the ratification of the convention on 20 May 2015.

Agenda

The network of contact parliamentarians will continue to meet in 2015.

Next meeting:

- 24th meeting of the network, on Thursday, 25 June 2015, during the June part-session.

Website and social networks

Interviews, handbooks, compendia, newsletters, leaflets: find all the information you need about the parliamentary dimension of the campaign at the following address: www.assembly.coe.int/oneinfive

and on Facebook: “Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign”.

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