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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Sexual abuse and exploitation of children is a cause which concerns us all – as professionals and in our private lives. I will never tire saying that we all have the responsibility to “break the silence” whenever we see or suspect sexual violence against children in our surroundings.

However, there is a particular responsibility to be borne by public authorities at every level: they need to take appropriate and effective action to fight this scourge. Thus I very much welcome the fact that the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has recently joined the ONE in FIVE Campaign. The involvement of the Congress completes the action of governments and parliaments by conveying the central campaign messages to local and regional level.

In order to be effective, all action – both in the public and the private sphere – must be integrated into comprehensive strategies. In my own country, Germany, we have a longstanding tradition of child welfare strategies, which, from our experience, need to clearly define responsibilities and timelines to make results measurable.

This is the case with the Council of Europe draft Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2012-2015, which will hopefully be adopted by the Committee of Ministers soon. The Parliamentary Assembly will support the implementation of this Strategy to which the ONE in FIVE Campaign is closely linked under objective No. 2: “to eliminate all forms of violence against children”. Let us continue to work together to achieve this objective!
**Network of contact parliamentarians**

**News: 6th network meeting, Strasbourg**

**Debate on the means to redress and eliminate sexual violence against children**

On 24 January 2012, during the first 2012 part-session, the 6th meeting of the Network of Contact Parliamentarians for the Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children will take place.

The presentations by Mr Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe and by Mr Eric Ruelle, Judge and Chair of the new Committee of Parties for the Lanzarote Convention will launch the debate on the means to redress and eliminate sexual violence against children. The Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Ms Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, will give an update on the ONE in FIVE Campaign, followed by a statement by Mr Jean-Claude Frécon, President of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, on the involvement of the Congress in the campaign.

**Latest: 5th network meeting, Florence**

**Adoption of the Florence Declaration**

On 17 November 2011, the Network of Contact Parliamentarians for the Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children met in Florence.

Organised in co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, the 5th network meeting was devoted to the issue of prevention of sexual violence against children.

The parliamentarians had an exchange of views on this issue with Ms de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, with the researchers of the Innocenti Research Centre, as well as with several international experts.

The contact parliamentarians for Italy, Germany, Mexico and Portugal presented good national practices. The meeting was also presented with a first overview of the achievements of the ONE in FIVE Campaign, and of the contributions of the Parliamentary Assembly and of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to the campaign.

At the end of the meeting, the contact parliamentarians adopted the Florence Declaration, which you will find enclosed.

**National parliamentary initiatives**

**Greece**

**Promotion of the campaign in Greece**

After the Conference of Athens in June 2011, two other events were organised in Greece to promote the ONE in FIVE Campaign, one in Thessaloniki on 14 November 2011, and the other in Heraklion on 12 December 2011.

These two events of information and prevention against sexual violence against children were organised on the initiative of Mr Michail Katrinis, contact parliamentarian for Greece.

**Monaco**

**Launch of the parliamentary dimension of the ONE in FIVE Campaign**

The Sub-committee on Children of the Parliamentary Assembly met on 21 November 2011, at the Grimaldi Forum, in the presence of HRH the Princess of Hanover, for a high-level round table on “The effective implementation of strategies for the protection of children: the interaction between public authorities, the private sector and civil society”.

On the initiative of Mr Marquet, contact parliamentarian for Monaco, the parliamentary dimension of the ONE in FIVE Campaign was launched in Monaco, with the support of the National Council of the Principality of Monaco.

**Romania**

**Debate at the Senate of Romania and translation of the handbook in Romanian**

On 24 November 2011, the Senate of Romania held a debate on “the protection of children against sexual exploitation: challenges, good practices, guidelines”, moderated by Mr Sorin-Constantin Lazar, contact parliamentarian for Romania. The participants received the electronic version of the handbook for parliamentarians on the Lanzarote Convention, translated into Romanian.
In our capacity as parliamentarians members of the Council of Europe Network of Contact Parliamentarians to stop sexual violence against children, who have convened in Florence today, at the invitation of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in the Istituto degli Innocenti for the 5th meeting of the network in 2011 to advance combating sexual violence against children:

CONVINCED that following the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000) which stand as the landmark instruments for the protection of children and adolescents, the Council of Europe has today become a leading player in this battle;

UPHOLDING the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (known as the Lanzarote Convention) as the first legal instrument requiring governments to criminalise all forms of sexual violence by adults against children;

MINDFUL of the fact that sexual violence against children has taken on dramatic dimensions. Official figures indicate that one child in five has fallen prey to it in various forms: sexual abuse; sexual exploitation through “child pornography”; prostitution; solicitation via the Internet (grooming); corruption of children; sexual assault by peers;

CONVINCED of the need to pool the efforts, also at the international level, of a maximum number of States in Europe and throughout the world with their parliaments, governments and civil society, as called for by the ONE in FIVE Campaign launched by the Council of Europe;

LOOKING AHEAD to Universal Children’s Day on 20 November 2011,

WE HEREBY UNDERTAKE

1) to ensure that each of our countries determinedly combat the root causes of what we consider to be one of the most heinous crimes and one of the most serious violations of human rights;

2) to ensure that each State which we represent signs, ratifies and implements the Lanzarote Convention as soon as possible;

3) to ensure that the measures adopted to combat these crimes involve all the institutional players and everyone working in civil society in non-governmental organisations and associations, as well as the private sector, families and children themselves;

4) to invite the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a thematic report on sexual violence against children, and to take this issue into account during his visits to various countries;

5) to suggest that the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly devotes a current affairs debate to this issue within next year’s agenda, also on the basis of the possible aforementioned report by the Human Rights Commissioner;

6) to request that the Council of Europe organises an international conference on the occasion of 20 November 2012 – Universal Children’s Day – to disseminate national good practices, with the specific contribution of the national child rights institutions of the Council of Europe member States and in order to launch a joint pan-European Action Plan.

Mindful of the importance and the difficulty of this commitment, we, members of the network of contact parliamentarians, appeal to parliamentarians and experts from the whole of Europe, to civil society and associations, to join us in combating this odious crime: violence perpetrated against children.