

SIXTH CROSS-REGIONAL MEETING FOR ADVANCING THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE

Stockholm, 30-31 May 2016

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We, the participants in the Sixth Cross-Regional Meeting for advancing the protection of children from violence, promoted by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children (SRSG on VAC) and hosted by the Council of the Baltic Sea States; coming from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Central-American Integration System (SICA), the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat, the Council of Europe Secretariat, the League of Arab States, the Inter-American Children's Institute of the Organization of American States (IIN-OAS), the Institute for Public Policies and Human Rights of the Permanent Commission of the initiative "NiñoSur" of MERCOSUR (El Mercado Común del Sur); SACG (South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children); the African Child Policy Forum and the Global Movement for Children of Latin American and the Caribbean (MMI-LAC);

Recognizing the critical role played by intergovernmental Regional Organizations and Institutions as catalysts of progress for the promotion of enhanced accountability for children's rights, including their right to freedom from violence, and acknowledging the value of pursuing cooperation with civil society and child-led organizations;

Valuing the SRSG's support to the strengthening of regional commitment, processes and initiatives, and to enhancing cross-regional and South-South cooperation, as well as to the promotion and monitoring of regional progress towards the full implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children;

Noting with appreciation the platform for dialogue and communication initiated and facilitated by the SRSG with Regional Organizations and Institutions as an important mechanism, in the framework of the United Nations, to share knowledge and good practices, facilitate cross-fertilization of experiences, coordinate efforts, enhance synergies, identify trends and anticipate future challenges and contribute to accelerating progress in children's protection from violence;

Welcoming the SRSG's leading advocacy to promote, in cooperation with Regional Organizations and Institutions, the inclusion in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of violence against children as a distinct and cross-cutting priority concern;

Stressing the strategic opportunity presented by adoption of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development with its specific goals and targets on violence against children (4.7, 4a, 5.2, 5.3, 8.7, 11.7, 16.2), especially target 16.2 towards ending all forms of violence against children to mobilize increased commitment, action and resources for the safeguarding of children's right to freedom from violence and from fear, and the key role of intergovernmental Regional Organizations and Institutions in promoting regional support and national action, including through the promotion of a holistic national sustainable development agenda, to accelerate progress on these targets, as well as contributing towards global monitoring and reporting on implementation of the new Agenda;

Gathered in Stockholm during the year of the 10th anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children and the 20th anniversary of the first World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, and reaffirming our strong commitment to further accelerate and assess progress achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children in our respective regions, and to reinforce our co-operation in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children;

Recognizing the opportunity to strengthen collaboration and accelerate progress in children's protection from violence with the current development in various regions of regional strategies to advance Agenda 2030 and strengthen the protection of children's rights;

Having examined the follow-up provided to the conclusions and recommendations of the fifth Cross-Regional Round Table (Strasbourg, 2015) and welcoming the thematic debate held in March 2016 in the UN Human rights Council on information and communications technologies and child sexual exploitation and reaffirming our commitment to prevent and address sexual violence against children as a key concern in policy and legal frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, including through further strengthening national legislation to clearly prohibit all forms of violence against children, including sexual abuse and exploitation in all settings; to secure the protection of child victims and their access to effective child-sensitive counselling, reporting and complaint procedures, as well as to reparation and recovery and reintegration services; investing in prevention, through awareness-raising, culturally sensitive information and education, and capacity building initiatives; supporting children's empowerment and their participation in initiatives for safeguarding their right to freedom from sexual violence both online and offline; strengthening data and research to monitor progress and inform policy-making to overcome the invisibility of sexual violence and to fight impunity.

1. Welcome the significant progress made over the past year towards the protection of children from all forms of violence, including the increased number of:

- ratifications of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹ and other international and regional child rights legal instruments;
- comprehensive national legislation to ban all forms of violence against children in all settings,² including corporal punishment within the family, and to strengthen children's legal protection from harmful practices including child marriage, sexual abuse, exploitation, bullying and online risks;
- national multi-sectoral integrated strategies to prevent and address violence against children, at times as a core component of the national development plan³;
- comprehensive national surveys conducted in different regions to assess the prevalence and severity of children's exposure to physical, emotional and sexual violence;
- information and awareness-raising campaigns to build a culture of respect for children's rights and freedom from violence, and to promote change in attitudes and behaviour that condone violence against children, and break the invisibility surrounding this phenomenon;
- initiatives led by children and young people to advocate for children's protection from violence, to raise awareness about the detrimental impact of violence on child

¹ OPSC ratified by 173 states and OPCR by 27 states

² Most recently by Ireland, Peru, Lao PDR and Mongolia

³ Most recently in Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Indonesia, Norway and Nigeria

development and wellbeing, and to inform the development of policies and legislation to prevent and eliminate violence against children;

- regional plans to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against children, as well as initiatives to combat extreme forms of violence and crimes against children, aligned with Agenda 2030;
- global initiatives to promote the protection of children from violence, including the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative; the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children; Alliance 8.7 to bring an end to child labour and modern slavery; the Global Youth Partnership for the SDGs; and the WeProtect Global Alliance;

2. **Reaffirm our determination to further promote individual and joint initiatives** to invest in the prevention of violence against children, which has a high return for society and for the wellbeing of children, to review progress made within and across regions, to consolidate achievements made and address the significant challenges that continue to hamper the realization of children's rights and their protection from all forms of violence, with a particular impact amongst vulnerable children, such as those who are seeking asylum, who are refugees, those affected by migration, children deprived of their liberty, children with disabilities, children with albinism, those living on the street or in extreme poverty, those impacted by the financial crisis, those with a different sexual orientation or gender identity, those affected by armed conflict, gang and community violence, political instability, displaced by natural disasters and those living in other emergency situations, as well as to address the transnational dimensions of child protection;

3. **Express deep concern at the pervasiveness and severity** of violence against children, its long-lasting impact on child victims and high cost for society, and recognizing that this phenomenon remains hidden, concealed and unreported and is surrounded by stigma and by a deep sense of impunity;

4. **Further enhance strategic partnerships** to accelerate progress in this endeavour, including Member States, national institutions, Ombuds for children, civil society, academia, the media, the private sector, and faith-based organizations, and in particular by supporting the implementation of a safe, inclusive and empowering digital agenda for children and the promotion of a dedicated multi-stakeholder platform to balance children's empowerment and improved use of ICTs and their online safety and protection;

5. **Commit to mobilize support for the realization of the vision in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for peaceful, just and inclusive societies**, and particularly towards achievements of Target 16.2 to end all forms of violence against children, and the other violence against children related targets (4.7, 4a, 5.2, 5.3, 8.7, 11.7) by promoting a cross-sectoral approach and strengthening implementation of comprehensive national strategies for violence prevention and elimination, strengthening and enforcing national legislation, ensuring access to justice and universal birth registration of children, mobilizing partnerships and action, and by enhancing data systems, with high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data, and to promote and engage in the follow-up and review of this agenda through strong accountability mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels;

6. **Express commitment to build upon the opportunities and momentum provided in 2016 by the 10th anniversary of the UN Study on Violence against Children, the 20th anniversary of the Stockholm World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and the start of the process of implementation of Agenda 2030** to trigger urgent political action and public support to safeguard children's protection from violence and accelerate progress towards achieving the SDG targets on violence against children, especially target 16.2, including by promoting high-level policy fora as well as the development and implementation of regional plans aligned with Agenda 2030; to collect,

analyse and publicize data on violence against children and to report on progress achieved, including in the framework of the follow-up and review of Agenda 2030; to document and consolidate positive developments, address priority areas of concern and accelerate progress in this area; to organize a multi-stakeholder debate on violence against children and associate public figures and authoritative voices committed to this cause to generate awareness about the pervasiveness and serious impact of violence on children, and to mobilize wide support to build a world free from violence for all children at all times;

7. Express commitment to foster the genuine and ethical participation of children and adolescents in all matters affecting them, with a specific focus on the promotion of SDG target 16.2;

8. Commend the SRSB for the successful launch of the global *High Time to End Violence against Children Initiative with a wide range of partners* to sustain momentum for implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study and towards the achievement of SDG Targets on violence against children, especially Target 16.2, and which highlights the need to close the gap between international standards, political commitments and action; to promote a culture of respect for children's rights, and of zero tolerance for violence; to mobilize all stakeholders who can actively engage and contribute to this effort, including governments, inter-governmental bodies, professional associations, faith-based organizations, the private sector and civil society partners, as well as children and young people, to express commitment and pledge their time, talents and resources to the elimination of all forms of violence against children; and to encourage Regional Organizations and Institutions to disseminate and mobilise support for the High Time Initiative;

9. Agree to report back on the progress achieved at the 2017 Cross-Regional Round Table;

10. Reaffirm our commitment to continue to support the SRSB in her efforts to strengthen children's protection from violence and to put into practice the measures necessary to prevent it and address it as a matter of urgency, and to accelerate achievement of SDG targets on violence against children, especially Target 16.2 to end all forms of violence against children;

11. Express profound gratitude to the Council of the Baltic Sea States for hosting the 2016 Cross-Regional Round Table on Violence against Children and for its crucial contribution to the meeting;

12. Welcome the invitation conveyed by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to host the 2017 Cross-Regional Meeting in Manilla, the Philippines, as one of the commemorative activities of the 50th anniversary of ASEAN, as well as the invitation conveyed by the League of Arab States to host the subsequent Cross-Regional Round Table of Regional Organisations and Institutions.