



Making Europe and Central Asia Fit for Children

Sarajevo 13 - 15 May 2004

Second Intergovernmental Conference

Sarajevo Commitment

15 May 2004

Underlining the obligations undertaken by states of Europe and Central Asia in ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the two Optional Protocols to this Convention and stressing the need to accelerate the implementation of these legal instruments,

Emphasizing the importance for states of Europe and Central Asia which have not yet signed and ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to do so as a matter of urgency,

Recalling the Berlin Commitment adopted at the First Intergovernmental Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia held in Berlin in May 2001, in which member states pledged to create a Europe and Central Asia 'fit for children',

Noting that the Berlin Conference has drawn particular attention to the special responsibility of the Region to promote the participation of children in decision-making processes, calling for a shift in attitudes to enable such a development,

Reaffirming the assessment of the situation in the Region made at the Berlin Conference, in particular that:

- despite contrasted trends, challenges facing children across the region of Europe and Central Asia are increasingly shared,
- child poverty in both parts of Europe and Central Asia is one of the greatest obstacles to the fulfilment of children's rights,
- discrimination and exclusion remain a reality for many children in the Region,
- despite legal protection in place in many countries, violence, abuse and exploitation continue to affect children across the Region,

Fully endorsing the United Nations General Assembly's Special Session on Children in New York in May 2002, where states committed themselves to the goals of *A World Fit for Children* and identified the following measures for follow-up action:

- strengthening national action in favour of children with a set of specific, time bound and measurable goals and targets, taking into account the rights of children as contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- establishing the necessary co-ordination and ensuring resource allocation for these goals;
- regularly monitoring and reviewing progress at the national level to address obstacles and accelerate action;
- underlining the importance of partnerships with civil society actors who have a unique role and contribution to make in advancing children's rights;

Concerned at developments that are leading to increased vulnerability of children and are threatening their rights and security, and urging states in the Region to take the necessary measures to end all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation of children, including trafficking,

We, the participants of the Second Intergovernmental Conference on Making Europe and Central Asia Fit for Children (Sarajevo 13-15 May 2004), while welcoming progress achieved during the last three years:

1. Solemnly re-affirm our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and our commitments as contained in the *Berlin Commitment* of May 18th 2001 and in the UN Special Session on Children outcome document *A World Fit for Children* of May 10th 2002, and pledge ourselves in particular to:
 - a. provide leadership in adopting national plans of action by May 2005 and take concrete steps toward the implementation of their goals, ensuring monitoring and evaluation of these Plans, with the involvement of children;
 - b. take measures to establish or strengthen national structures and mechanisms for the implementation of children's rights, including, where appropriate, independent children's rights institutions;
 - c. make significant increases in investment in and for children, redirecting resources towards reducing child poverty, prioritising social equity and building physical and social capital for children;
 - d. monitor progress towards making Europe and Central Asia 'fit for children', both as an input into national policy and as a basis for the report to the UN General Assembly in 2007 by the UN Secretary General;
 - e. strengthen the use of international cooperation mechanisms to protect children moving across borders, and where possible to prevent such movements that are not in the best interest of the child, and provide full protection to children found across borders, including support and reintegration in cases of return;
 - f. take concrete action to ensure that education is compulsory, free and of good quality and that social exclusion is addressed in education systems, both to improve the quality of education within schools and to take decisive action to tackle exclusion arising outside the school, with particular attention to the situation of children with disabilities, children of minorities and school leavers;
 - g. initiate and support actions aimed at ensuring state accountability to protect children from all forms of violence, including violence as a result of conflict, in the home, in the media and other technologies, through inter-alia, the adoption of appropriate legislation, education and awareness raising campaigns, the provision of confidential child protection services and the strengthening of monitoring and reporting mechanisms;
 - h. contribute actively to the United Nations Secretary-General's in-depth study on the question of violence against children at both national and regional levels;
 - i. encourage local authorities and communities to make their cities 'child friendly' in respect to infrastructure, access to services, safe living environments and involvement of children in local decision-making;
 - j. create an environment, processes and structures to facilitate the participation of children and young people in all areas affecting their lives;
2. *Decide* to continue working towards achieving these goals within Europe and Central Asia as well as within the United Nations, in partnership with civil society, children, media, United Nations and other development partners;
3. *Further decide* to systematically review progress achieved in attaining these goals and report progress as requested to the UN Secretary General;

**We recommit ourselves to this task,
because a world fit for children is a world fit for everyone.**