

**INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: THE ROLE OF
INTERNATIONAL ACTORS AND DONORS**

**Consultation in preparation for the World Congress III against Sexual
Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, November 2008**

Florence, 23 – 24 October 2008

*Smiljana Knez, MA
Head of Human Rights Unit
MFA Slovenia*

Panel discussion on Experience from International and Regional Cooperation from a
Rights Based Approach to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation

- EU Guidelines for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child -

Introduction

- Let me at the outset sincerely thank the Innocenti Research Centre and its director, Ms Marta Santos Pais for organising this important event and for inviting us to participate in it. The panel that we attend today and tomorrow is extremely important contribution to the 3rd World Congress against the sexual exploitation of children. It is one in a series of such events and I read with great interest the report of the April's Expert Consultation Meeting.
- One of the five panels at the Congress will focus on the strategies for International cooperation. My task today is to present EU efforts in this regard.

Slovenia

- Slovenia has put protection and promotion of children's rights very high on its foreign policy agenda. We focus mainly on children in armed conflict and on violence against children. Our aim is also strengthening of the international legal framework for protection of children's rights.
- Children's rights are our priority also when it comes to all three key regional organizations, that were, or will be, chaired by my country in a rather short period

of time; OSCE in 2005 (where we launched an OSCE project on human rights education that was implemented in more than half of OSCE members), European Union in the first half of 2008 (I will speak about it in a minute) and Council of Europe between May and November next year. In 2005 Slovenia organized and hosted a regional Yokohama follow up conference in the framework of Council of Europe. The Council of Europe has, as you know, in 2007 adopted a Convention against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and we will do our best to speed up the process of ratification and implementation of this Convention.

Regional Cooperation

- Before presenting the EU mechanisms for protection and promotion of the rights of the child in its foreign policy and external action, let me remark briefly on the importance of regional cooperation in general. In the efforts to combat the sexual exploitation of children the role of regional organisation is simply indispensable.
- It was a regional initiative that has started the whole process, ECPAT; A regional initiative "End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism" in the 90-ties mobilized national NGOs and motivated governments to adopt new legislation to protect children from sexual exploitation.
- Regional organisations usually know the situation much better; their members are countries with similar systems and often with similar problems. The role of regional organizations is also in their contribution to the strengthening of the international norms and standards.

European Union

- In my contribution I will focus on the EU activities in its foreign policy and external action. I am not in a position to inform this audience about internal EU activities, let me just say, that the EU has in December 2003 adopted the "Framework Decision on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography". This Framework Decision is now under scrutiny of relevant EU bodies in order to identify possible gaps with key international conventions, in particular with the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child and with the Council of Europe Convention on the Sexual exploitation of children.
- When it comes to the protection and promotion of human rights in the Common Foreign and Security Policy and external action, the EU has several mechanisms on its disposal. Relevant HR issues are raised in human rights dialogues and in the

framework of broader political dialogues with individual states. Through its financial mechanisms, in particular through EIDHR the EU gives financial support to concrete projects. The EU pursues its goals also in the UN framework, where it consistently advocates for children's rights. Together with GRULAC, the group of Latin American countries in the UN the EU each year tables a omnibus resolution on the rights of the child. The EU has been strong supporter of the establishment of the SG special representative on violence against children.

- In addition to all these the EU has in December 2007 EU adopted a set of guidelines on children's rights. Unicef and civil society were involved in the preparation process and are now consulted also in the implementation phase.

The EU Guidelines on children's rights

- The purpose of the guidelines is to streamline EU activities regarding the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The guidelines complement the in 2003 adopted guidelines on children affected by armed conflicts.
- The guidelines guide EU action in international forums with the aim to give more weight to the rights of the child and to advocate for full realization of children's rights as enshrined in key international instruments.
- The EU will do this in active promotion of the rights of the child as an integral part of the EU external human rights policy, including in development and peace and security contexts. One of the key aims is capacity building of "duty-bearers" (states and governments to meet their obligations) as well as of "rights-holders" (children).
- For this purpose the EU will remind and encourage states and support them in their efforts to meet their international obligations and commitments; it will raise awareness and promote better understanding of the principles and provisions on the rights of the child as enshrined in the key international mechanisms.
- The EU also commits itself to improving the coherence between activities undertaken by various EU actors (EU MS, overall EU external action, European Commission). The EU will use its political dialogues and specific human rights dialogues, demarches, and its bi - and multilateral cooperation and will intensify cooperation with international stakeholders.

- In the implementation chapter there is a guidance for the EU to encourage states to adhere to international norms, to reinforce capacity at the national level, to improve monitoring processes and structures, to promote allocation of resources for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, to promote law reforms,. To combat and discourage violations of children's rights, to empower children for a more effective participation in decision making and implementation of policies, to enhance families and other caretakers' capacities and to support the awareness raising programs.

The Implementation strategy – violence against children

- Together with the Guidelines the EU has adopted also the implementation strategy that for the first two years focuses on all forms of violence against children, including sexual exploitation.
- What is particularly relevant for today's discussion is the EU highlights on violence as global phenomena and the promotion of the worldwide support for the recommendations of the UN study on violence against children.
- The action of the EU is twofold; on the one hand the EU supports and advocates for international mechanisms for protection and promotion of the rights of the child. At the same time, the EU is ready to support concrete policies/projects in individual countries.
- This action will be based on the country-specific strategies that will – on the basis of a comprehensive assessment of the situation in individual country, include the following:
 - advocacy for ratification and for withdrawal of reservation to the key international instruments, as well as advocacy for effective implementation of these instruments;
 - advocacy for legislative reforms, encouragement and support for the establishment of independent national monitoring and complaints mechanisms,
 - advocacy for involvement of children and for the establishment of independent national strategies;
 - encouragement and support for national data collection, for capacity building measures, for child-friendly recovery and social reintegration

services to victims and for the establishment of accountability mechanisms for ending impunity.

- At the initial stage the EU decided to implement the guidelines in ten pilot countries. In all phases of its work, the EU is closely cooperating with UN bodies, in particular with UNICEF and with civil society – I sincerely thank Innocenti Research Centre and in particular its director for valuable contribution in the process, as well as NGOs, in particular Tanya Cox for coordination their contributions.

Resummeé /Challenges ahead /how the EU action fits in the global efforts in combating sexual exploitation of children/

- As we have seen, the recently developed guidelines on children's rights cover in their implementation strategy also EU efforts in combating sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. In advocating for ratification of key international documents, for withdrawals of reservations and for implementation of international obligations and commitments, the EU convey a strong message about the importance of children's rights. Depending on individual national strategies, the EU will in some cases undoubtedly focus also on combating sexual exploitation in individual countries/regions.
- The EU and its member states are, as explained at the beginning, also very active in the UN framework. In this vein we promote the enhancement of international mechanisms for protection and promotion of the rights of the child.
- It is to be expected that the 3rd World Congress will identify possible existing gaps and will define ways for improving the responsiveness of all stakeholders when it comes to all three key elements; prevention, prosecution of offenders and protection of victims.
- What to expect from World Congress III – I am speaking here in my national capacity as we have not discussed the issue in the EU framework yet; The Congress should reaffirm our common commitments to combat sexual violence against children. One of the challenges is how to better connect all relevant existing mechanisms in order to identify gaps and propose their improvements. The Congress should mobilize all key actors to invest more efforts and to coordinate their activities more effectively.

- The preparatory phase is extremely important and let me once again thank the Innocenti for all their work done.