



VII Cross-Regional Meeting for Advancing the Protection of Children from Violence

Manila, 6-8 June 2017

Conclusions and Recommendations

We, the participants in the Seventh Cross-Regional Meeting for advancing the protection of children from violence, “Placing Children at the Heart of the Sustainable Development Agenda: Accelerating Progress in Children’s Protection from Violence”, promoted by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children (SRSG on VAC) and hosted with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)¹ during its 50th anniversary under the chairmanship of the Philippines; coming from the Council of Europe Secretariat; the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat; the Inter-American Children’s Institute of the Organization of American States (IIN-OAS); the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC); SACG (South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the African Child Policy Forum and the Global Movement for Children of Latin America and the Caribbean (MMI-LAC);

Welcoming the organization alongside the Cross-Regional meeting of an ASEAN Children’s Forum which addressed areas of particular concern, including the protection of children from bullying and online abuse, and the empowerment and participation of children to prevent and address incidents of violence;

Recognizing the critical role played by intergovernmental Regional Organizations and Institutions as catalysts of change in 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 and towards the elimination of all forms of violence against children, as pledged by the international community in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Noting with appreciation the platform for dialogue and communication initiated and led 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

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With the participation of the ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General for the Socio-Cultural Community and representatives from the ACWC, AICHR, AIPA, SOMED, SOMSWD and SOMY

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 and the significant steps that have been further pursued in support of an effective implementation process towards the elimination of all forms of violence against children, including children's protection from bullying and cyberbullying and online abuse;

Stressing the strategic opportunity presented by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its specific targets on violence against children (4.7, 4a, 5.2, 5.3, 8.7, 11.7), and 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 SDG targets, as well as contributing towards global monitoring and reporting on implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

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 to advance progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

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 the 2030 Agenda and strengthen the protection of children's rights, and the importance of ensuring children's participation in this process;

Having examined the follow-up provided to the conclusions and recommendations of the sixth Cross-Regional meeting (Stockholm 2016) and recalling the important initiatives promoted over the past year in support 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, the 20th anniversary of the first World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, and to advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

Reaffirming our strong commitment to reinforce our co-operation in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children and to further accelerate and assess progress achieved, including by supporting countries in their implementation efforts, in the mainstreaming of SDG violence-related targets in their national plans, policies, laws and budgets; and in the strengthening of gender-sensitive data systems on children's exposure to violence;

Recognizing the strategic opportunity provided by the annual session of the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the development of voluntary national reviews to promote and assess progress towards the elimination of all forms of violence against children as foreseen by SDG target 16.2 and other violence-related targets in the 2030 Agenda;

Recalling that in 2017 the HLPF will focus on "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world" during which crucial attention should be given to promoting a protective environment for children to overcome deprivation, social exclusion, gender discrimination and other vulnerabilities which compromise children's well-being and generate a high risk of children being exposed to violence;

Further recalling that half of those living in extreme poverty are children and that child poverty creates and sustains intergenerational cycles of poverty, increasing the risks of poor health, poor school performance and long-term welfare dependency;

Reaffirming the right of every child to grow up in a nurturing, non-violent family environment and to access universal, inclusive and child-sensitive basic social services of quality, including health care and a safe learning environment, and calling for integrated approaches and cross-sectoral cooperation guided by the best interests of the child to address the multifaceted nature of deprivation and violence against children, and to provide effective family support and child protection services;

Recognizing the urgency of investing in violence prevention, including through early childhood and good parenting initiatives for the promotion of a non-violent family environment for every child, and through enhanced mobilization of national resources as well as ODA to support initiatives to prevent and respond to violence against children, with priority being given to the most disadvantaged children;

Underlining the critical importance of ensuring the protection of the rights of refugee and migrant children regardless of their status, taking into account their specific vulnerabilities and risk of exposure to violence, and recognizing the urgency of preventing and bringing to an end the deprivation of liberty of refugee and migrant children, as well as of ensuring their access to age-appropriate, gender-responsive and child-friendly services and support; and stressing the importance of supporting States in the development of child-sensitive laws and policies, in the elaboration of action plans², and in the monitoring of progress;

Recognizing also the significant measures taken by regional organizations to support, under States' leadership, the establishment of multidisciplinary and interagency models for violence prevention and the protection of child victims and of those at risk of violence, such as Children's Houses and other similar one-stop centres, which bring together under one roof relevant well-trained professionals from child protection, welfare, medical and law enforcement services to promote a child-friendly environment, to prevent children's re-victimization and to gather the needed evidence to safeguard children's access to justice and their enjoyment of due process and a fair trial;

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 Child³ and other international and regional child rights legal instruments;
- comprehensive national legislation to ban all forms of violence against children in all settings⁴, including corporal punishment within the family; as well as to ensure a safe, inclusive and child-sensitive digital agenda, and to strengthen children's legal protection from harmful practices including child marriage, and from 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 plan⁵;
- comprehensive national surveys conducted in different regions to assess the prevalence and severity of children's exposure to physical, emotional and sexual violence⁶;

² Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children (2017-2019)

³ OPSC ratified by 173 states and OPCP by 34 states

⁴ Most recently by Ireland, Lithuania, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Paraguay, Peru, Slovenia and Vietnam

⁵ Most recently in Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria, Norway and Tunisia

⁶ Most recently in Cambodia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Lao PDR, Philippines and Tanzania

- 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 development and wellbeing, and to inform the development of policies and legislation to prevent and eliminate violence against children, such as those promoted in the framework of MERCOSUR on protection from bullying and cyberbullying, and of the 4th ASEAN Children's Forum on protection from online abuse and from trafficking;
- 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 the 2030 Agenda, such as the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children (2016–2025), the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016–2021), the African Agenda for Children 2040 and the ECOWAS Strategic Framework on Child Protection Systems Strengthening to Prevent and Respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation of Children in West Africa;
- global initiatives to promote a culture of prevention of violence to safeguard the social capital of nations and to safeguard the protection of children from violence, including the United Nations report on Protecting Children from Bullying, the Global Plan of Action to Strengthen the Role of the Health System in addressing violence against children, the INSPIRE package of evidence-based strategies, the Global Study for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, and the report *Counting the Pennies* which reviews Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations to address violence against children, as well as the High Time to End Violence against Children mobilization initiative to promote a culture of respect for children's rights and of zero tolerance for violence; 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 to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online;

2. **Reaffirm our determination to further promote individual and joint initiatives** to invest in a culture of 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 emphasis on 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 in street situations or in extreme poverty, those impacted by financial crisis, those who experience discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, those affected by armed conflict, gang and community violence, political instability, those 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 social tolerance, 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. **Commit to further enhance strategic partnerships** to accelerate progress in this endeavour, including with States, national institutions, Ombuds for children, civil society, professional associations, faith-based organizations, traditional leaders, academia, the media, the private sector, as well as children themselves;

5. **Commit to mobilize support for the realization of the vision in the 2030 Agenda for peaceful, just and inclusive societies**, and particularly towards achievements of SDG 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 supported by adequate resources, strengthening and enforcing national legislation on children's protection from all forms of violence, ensuring access to justice and universal birth registration of children, 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 continue to build upon the opportunities and momentum provided by the UN Study on Violence against Children and the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda** 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 the 2030 Agenda; 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 the 2030 Agenda; 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 fear and violence for all children at all times;

7. **Welcome the organization alongside the Cross-Regional meeting of a Children's Forum with the participation of young people from ASEAN Member States and the Republic of Korea, as well as the recommendations put forward by child participants**

8. **Express commitment to create a culture of children's empowerment and the genuine and ethical participation of children and adolescents in all matters affecting them, and to help place children at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a specific focus on the promotion of SDG target 16.2;**

9. **Welcome the significant initiatives promoted at the regional level to support child participation and empowerment and express commitment to further pursue initiatives that prioritize prevention**, including through engagement with children to enhance awareness of their rights and strengthen their skills and capacities to identify and prevent risks, and secure their effective protection; through support to child victims and survivors of violence to enable them to express their views in a safe and empowering environment at all stages of reporting, referral, investigation and follow-up processes; and through support to survivors in their recovery and reintegration.

10. **Commend the SRSG for the successful research conducted on children's protection from all forms of violence, including bullying and cyberbullying and for her influential advocacy** to mobilize support for the effective implementation of laws and policies, and the consolidation of data to prevent and respond to this serious form of violence, as called for by the report of the UN Secretary-General on this topic;⁷

11. **Express commitment to support progress in children's protection from all forms of violence, including bullying and cyberbullying**, in the framework of efforts towards the achievement of violence-related SDG targets, in particular 16.2, and to advance implementation of the recommendations included in the report of the UN Secretary-General on Protecting Children from Bullying;

⁷ See A/71/213 and A/RES/71/176

12. **Recalling the important reflections on children’s protection from sexual violence during the Fifth Cross-Regional Meeting, in Strasbourg in 2015, and welcoming the increasing evidence on this topic^{8 9} reaffirm the urgency of protecting children from online abuse and of promoting a safe, inclusive and empowering digital agenda for children and a dedicated multi-stakeholder platform** to ensure an optimal balance between children’s curiosity, creativity, and empowerment to explore the online world in safety, and their effective protection from harm and resilience to cope with risks, while securing an early and effective detection of and response to risks, including through cross-regional and international cooperation;
13. **Agree to report back on the progress achieved at the 2018 Cross-Regional meeting;**
14. **Reaffirm our commitment to continue to support the SRSG 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 the SDG targets on violence against children, especially 16.2 to end all forms of violence against children;
15. **Express profound gratitude to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with the generous support of the Republic of Korea** for hosting the 2017 Cross-Regional meeting on Violence against Children and the parallel Children’s Forum;
16. **Welcome the invitation conveyed by the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) to host the 2018 Cross- Regional Meeting of Regional Organisations and Institutions.**

| www.srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org

⁸ See SRSG study “Releasing Children’s Potential and Minimizing Risks - ICTs, the Internet and Violence against Children” <http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/page/1154>

⁹ See UNICEF Philippines 2016 study “Perils and Possibilities: Growing up online” <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/UNICEFGrowinguponline.pdf>