

Press Release

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Much more needs to be done to fight all forms of violence against children

Vienna, 21.05.2010 - In an international conference, the Council of Europe brought together some 50 participants from over 20 countries worldwide to implement the UN mandate of eliminating all forms of violence against children. Participants took stock of progress made to fight such violence, but concluded that governments need to make progress internally, better coordinate efforts to defend children and more efficiently and accurately collect data.

'It is important to acknowledge progress made, when we look back at the adoption of legal instruments and legislation,' said Dr. Ursula Kilkelly, Senior Lecturer Faculty of Law at the University College Cork (Ireland). But 'legal change is not enough; it is not an end in itself,' she added, 'to bring about change in attitudes.' To realize this goal, participants called for greater partnerships between governments on the one hand and civil society and academia on the other.

Headlines raised by international media outlets during the conference highlighted continued resistance by some countries to ban all forms of corporal punishment against children. During the conference, for example, Dominique Versini, French 'Défenseur des Enfants,' explained that regrettably there is 'not yet the political will in France' for such a ban. Idalia Moniz, Portuguese Secretary of State for Disability and Assistant to the Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, called for 'greater political courage' to effectuate a ban.

The Council of Europe was described as a leader in supporting and empowering governments to combat all forms of violence against children. The participants welcomed upcoming initiatives of the Council of Europe including the pan-European Campaign to end sexual violence against children, which will be launched in Rome on 29 November.

Adopted conference conclusions include:

- Promote child-friendly policy-planning and budgeting, including child impact assessment;
- Assure the participation of children in the definition and implementation of violence prevention policies;
- Ensure the independence and enhance the monitoring role of national ombudspersons for children;
- Develop indicators on violence that could be accurately compared not only among the 47 member states of the Council of Europe but also globally.
- Promote access to information, advocacy, independent complaints mechanisms
- Enhance professionals' knowledge of children's rights;

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