

18 November 2015 – European Day for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

Statement by Daniel Mitov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers

Strasbourg, 18.11.2015 - "Today is the first European Day for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. The protection of children is a priority for the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. It is therefore particularly pleased to support this initiative.

Sexual violence is the worst form of violence against children. Not only because of the immediate suffering it causes, but also for the irreparable, lifelong damage to the victim's physical and mental health. Today, we mark a Day when we – together – shout a resounding "NO" to these brutal and inhuman acts against children.

But it is also an opportunity to recall Europe's commitment to combat these crimes, notably through the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse – "the Lanzarote Convention" – which requires the criminalisation of all kinds of sexual offences against children. We call on the nine member States that have not yet ratified the Convention, to consider doing so.

We must also promote national actions and initiatives with a view to raising public awareness of child sex abuse, to break taboos and barriers and to strengthen the protection of children. To do this, all of us – governments, parliamentarians, NGOs, professionals working with children and the public at large – must take ownership of the European Day, by taking action together. So let us do it."

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