



Statement by the Delegation of Serbia

Delivered by Tamara Rastovac Siamashili, Head of Department for OSCE & CoE

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2016

Working Session 16: Rights of the child

Warsaw, 29 September 2016

Dear moderator,

Thank you for giving me the floor. Serbia aligned itself with the EU Statement. I would like, in national capacity, to inform you on activities undertaken in Serbia, in order to secure and further improve the protection and promotion of children's rights in my country.

Serbia pays a great attention to the rights of the child. We ratified United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as all relevant Hague Conventions related to the rights of the child. Further, necessary measures were undertaken to incorporate all rights of the child into special laws, including on education, healthcare, home affairs, justice, social welfare and childcare.

The rights of child in Serbia are regulated, among others, by the Family Law providing that everyone shall be guided by the best interest of child. Rights are also guaranteed by the Welfare Law including prohibition of discrimination against beneficiaries of social welfare based on race, sex, age, ethnicity, social standing, sexual orientation, religion, property, culture, language, disability or any other

characteristics as well as by Law on Financial Support to Families with Children, which is regulating right of the child to standard of living.

In the process of European integration of Serbia, the National Assembly passed in 2015 the Law on the Ratification of the Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children.

As of May 2002 the Council for the Rights of the Child is performing coordination in the field of rights of the child, as Government expert advisory working body and an executive mechanism for the promotion of rights of the child. By initiative of the said Council, draft Law on the Child Ombudsman has already been drawn up and the adoption is expected in the period ahead.

There are still challenges that we have to overcome, especially with regard to rights of children belonging to vulnerable groups such as the ones living in a poverty or the ones not yet included in the educational system like children living and working on the street. However, we are intensively working on these issues. In that context, the centres for social services formed 115 special teams in order to provide continuing welfare and family legal protection for street children.

Regarding welfare system reforms, significant steps have been made towards de-institutionalization of children deprived of parental care and children with developmental disabilities, which ranks Serbia among the countries with the lowest rate of institutionalization of these two target groups of children. Currently, 6 500 children without parental care and children with developmental disabilities are placed in foster families, whereas approximately 650 children are institutionalized,

which is a ratio of 90 per cent to 10 per cent in favour of less restrictive measures of protection for these children.

Also, significant efforts were made in the development of services at the local level to assist and support families having children with serious health and developmental problems, such as day childcare centres and clubs, home assistance, etc. In the framework of transformation of institutions the main direction is towards closing large facilities and development of small institutional communities having 8 - 12 inmates.

Serbia is seriously affected by current refugee and migrant crisis, having in mind that it is located along one of the major routes for the movement of refugees and migrants. Since many of them are children, all centres for social services and welfare institutions in Serbia were instructed in terms of providing temporary shelter, protection and care for these minors, with special emphasize on unaccompanied minor migrants.

Ladies and gentleman,

Without doubt, children are among the most vulnerable and their protection is responsibility of all of us. The way we treat, protect and care about children will define our future or as it was said in the introducing part of discussion, investing in children is investing in future. Serbia is committed to do its best in that regard.

Thank you.