

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 948th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 April 2013

Regarding the protection of children's rights

Madam Chairperson,

Ensuring the rights of children is a focus of particular attention in many international and regional organizations. Modern-day threats and challenges to the life, security, health and moral development of children are increasingly menacing. Trafficking in children, including for the purpose of removing human organs and tissue, child labour, sexual violence, child pornography, violence in the family, restrictions on a child's access to education, social protection and medical care – this is by no means a complete list of the problems that are typically encountered in the OSCE area and beyond. It is our common task to strengthen the system to protect children's rights.

The effective use of international instruments for the protection of children's rights is extremely important in this regard. These include, in particular, the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, the European Convention on Human Rights (articles 3, 5, 9, 18, 19 and 37) and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007). Many regional organizations traditionally pay considerable attention to this subject and develop mechanisms for the protection of children's rights.

The protection of children's rights is one of the priorities of the State policy of the Russian Federation. Our country is systematically implementing measures to create a comprehensive system for ensuring children's rights, including international human rights instruments. I should like to draw the Permanent Council's attention to the fact that on 13 April 2013 the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, submitted to the State Duma for ratification the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. We hope that our OSCE partners will also take such a responsible and systematic approach to resolving issues concerned with the protection of children's rights,

including accession to international conventions and the implementation of OSCE commitments.

Unfortunately, we are obliged to note that despite its relevance this subject receives far less attention within the OSCE than it deserves. The situation regarding children's rights in many OSCE participating States is a cause for serious concern, especially with respect to the conformity of national legislation with international commitments. The division in French society in connection with the well-known legislative initiatives regarding same-sex marriage and the possibility of adoption by same-sex couples sets alarm bells ringing. Information collected as part of a special study by the Samson Commission entitled "In care but not safe" shows that in the Netherlands children in care are 2.5 times more likely (143 out of 1,000 children) to be subjected to sexual violence than children in ordinary families. The ruling by a Dutch court essentially recognizing the possibility for the legal existence of organizations promoting paedophilia is most puzzling, as is the inappropriate classification by the Swedish Criminal Code of child pornography as nothing more than a "violation of public order".

Also cause for serious concern is the fact that corporal punishment is legal in the United States and Slovenia, children aged ten or over can face criminal proceedings in the United Kingdom, and the legalization in the United States of life imprisonment for minors without the right to early release. In Romania some 40,000 children are living in poverty without access to medical care, while some 80,000 children are involved in illegal business, including drug trafficking and prostitution.

Child abuse, cases in which adopted children have died and the unjustified removal of mixed-parentage children require particular attention. According to the United States Department of Health, in 2009 more than 700,000 minors were victims of abuse by first-degree relatives, and 1,770 children died. According to American non-governmental organizations, one in six international adoptions in the United States results in child abuse and serious violations of the child's rights. The case of the removal of four children, including a seven-day-old infant, from the family of the Russian citizen Anastasia Zavgorodnyaya in Finland was widely discussed.

Serious problems persist as regards the access to education in general and to education in their mother tongue in particular by children belonging to national minorities. It has not been possible to put an end to the segregation of Roma and Sinti children in a number of European countries or the segregation of representatives of national minorities, for example the Sami in Finland, and of immigrant children in Denmark and Finland. Racial segregation persists in State schools in the United States.

Against this background, it is regrettable that the protection of children's rights has not been reflected in the agenda for the OSCE human dimension events. This subject is also absent from the Human Dimension Committee's programme of work. We call on the Ukrainian Chairmanship and the OSCE participating States to find a way to discuss it this year. The Russian Government reaffirms its readiness to share positive experience and existing practices as regards the protection of children's rights with interested countries.

Thank you for your attention.