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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 981st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

23 January 2014

**Regarding the protection of children's rights**

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to draw your attention to a topic of the greatest importance – one which is a key issue for many international and regional organizations, but which has undeservedly fallen off the OSCE agenda over the past decade. That topic is the protection of children's rights.

Alarming reports of manifold children's rights violations in many OSCE States, and threats to the life, safety, health and moral development of children, require that action be taken without delay. We are deeply concerned by cases of child labour, sexual violence, child pornography, begging, vagrancy, domestic abuse – not only in adoptive families – and trafficking in children, including through social networks and online.

However far OSCE participating States may have come in establishing measures to protect children's rights, each country has problems that must be solved. Even in the most advanced democracies, civil society is sounding alarm bells. Specifically, in the United States of America, child protection NGOs claim that the problem of child abuse is a nationwide one. Social services are not coping with the rising number of cases of child abuse or neglect. According to the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, social services receive six million reports of improper treatment of children each year. Each day, five children die as a result of adult actions.

Not everything is rosy in European countries either, particularly in the application of the youth justice system. I might simply recall the recent resignation of the Ombudsman for Children in Finland, Maria Kaisa Aula, in the wake of the widely publicized case where twins were forcibly removed from the family of a Finnish activist by police.

There are still serious problems with access for ethnic minority children to education as a whole and to teaching in their mother tongues. Efforts to end the segregation of Roma and Sinti children in many European countries are not succeeding. More than 40,000 children live below the poverty line in Romania.

The issue of automatically conferring citizenship on the children of “non-citizens” has still not been resolved, although procedures for granting it as part of registration have been simplified. However, by law, decision-making power still resides with “competent bodies”. Indeed, the European Union Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, has raised this issue with regard to Latvia and Estonia on more than one occasion.

There is undoubtedly work to be done to improve the situation of children in Russia, too. We do indeed have many problems –particularly the unsatisfactory adoption situation. These issues are a priority for us and we are taking steps on child protection, including the use of international human rights protection mechanisms. We are prepared to share our positive experiences and best practices with interested countries.

We call on the Swiss Chairmanship and OSCE participating States to accord the greatest possible attention to the issue of protecting children’s rights and to find a way to have a focused discussion on the topic this year. This is all the more relevant given that in 1990 at the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, the States committed “to accord particular attention to the recognition of the rights of the child, his civil rights and his individual freedoms, his economic, social and cultural rights, and his right to special protection against all forms of violence and exploitation”. Also, in 1999 in Istanbul, they decided to “regularly address the rights of children in the work of the OSCE”. This is of particular importance if we consider that children make up more than a quarter of the population of the OSCE region. No less than other individual minority groups, they require support.

Thank you for your attention.