

Developing integrated strategies at a national level

I'm glad to send you the compliments of the Honourable Minister Maria Rosaria Carfagna, the Italian Minister for Equal Opportunity, and from Ms Matone, the Head of Cabinet of the Minister.

Ms Matone apologizes for not being able to be here for binding institutional commitments. She has given me the honour to present the Italian integrated strategies on violence against children.

I'd like to thank the UN Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe for giving us the opportunity to take stock of the progresses made in the implementation of integrated strategies and to exchange our experiences in this field.

Italy has firmly joined the Action Plan of the Council of Europe "Children and violence". For the Italian Government, this was also an opportunity to assess the degree of development and implementation of Italian policies for the prevention and fight against child abuse in the European framework.

The participation in the Action Plan underlined the strong commitment of Italy in this field, as already demonstrated during the drawing up of the Convention of the Council of Europe for the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

The reviewing process of the Italian prevention policies gave the chance to make a thorough analysis of the Italian strategy in this sector, underlining its strengths and weaknesses – which the Italian Government is fully aware of. The Report was also useful to promote the spreading of best practices which have proved to be effective, to bolster innovation and to solve problems and critical issues.

The principles guiding the action of Italy in defence of children's rights can be summarized as follows:

- ❖ **First:** Effective policies for children cannot be adopted without more general policies aimed at improving the social and political conditions of the entire Italian community. This includes:
 - policies against social exclusion and poverty;
 - efforts to reduce unemployment, to improve the health and well-being of individuals, to guarantee integration and social support for minorities, and to assure security and protection against crimes.

- ❖ **Second:** Adequate policies for children and for the prevention of violence. These policies cannot be developed only when the problems reach the crisis stage, but they require a general set of strategies which can be adopted gradually, allowing for coordination at all levels;
- ❖ **Third:** Effective policies for children cannot depend entirely on laws since legislation should be accompanied by administrative action that takes into account children's needs and respects their personalities and interests.

Some of the measures taken by Italy in the last decade to prevent and fight violence on children and to assist victims include:

- the reform of the legislative framework
- the establishment of centralized coordination structures, for instance the National Observatory on Childhood and the Inter-ministerial Committee against Paedophilia - CICLOPE;
- the development of projects for the creation of specialist services, counselling centres (for example, the 114 Childhood Emergency number) and instruments of multi-sector, inter-institutional coordination at a local level;
- initiatives to raise public awareness and specialist training courses for workers in the educational, social, healthcare, media and judicial sectors;
- the promotion of information campaigns among children and adolescents, aimed at encouraging their active participation;
- surveys and research to learn more about the phenomenon as well as to gain information about the nature of the phenomenon and the response across the country.

Before bringing to an end my speech, I'd like to spend a few words around the specific issue of the Italian action to combat sexual crimes against children.

Sexual abuse and sexual exploitation against minors have been the subject of reform and innovation by means of three laws:

1. **Law number 66 (sixty-six) of 1996(nineteen ninety-six)**, "Rules on sexual assault", that stems from deep social and cultural change in Italian society, since for the first time sexual crimes are considered as crimes against the person and not against public decency;
2. **Law number 269 (two hundred and sixty-nine) of 1998 (nineteen ninety-eight)**, "Provisions against the exploitation of child prostitution, pornography, and sex tourism as new forms of slavery", which accepts some of the main indications

made on the occasion of the World Congress in Stockholm against sexual exploitation.

3. **recent Law number 38 (thirty-eight of 2006 (two thousand and six)** , “New provisions on the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, also through the Internet”, which introduces several new criminal events and regulates the crime of pornography on the Internet, thus adjusting the rule to the provisions included in Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA (Justice and Home Affairs) of the European Union, on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography.

Thanking to this legislative updating, the Italian criminal code now condemns with extreme severity all forms of possible perversion or direct or indirect use of minors for sexual reasons, envisaging **very severe decreed sanctions**. Furthermore, since last year the Parliament has begun the ratification process of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. The Convention represents a great opportunity for each States to make a step forward in the fighting on sexual crimes against children.

With respect to the central coordination in this field, the Italian Minister for Equal Opportunities has the guiding functions of the central policies to combat sexual crimes against children. She has recently re-established the Inter-ministerial Coordinating Committee for the Fight against Paedophilia (CICLOPE), chaired by Honourable Minister Carfagna. The main task of this Committee is the coordination of the actions taken by the public administration for the prevention of sexual crimes against children and for the assistance to the victims.

I’m sure that reinforcing the coordination activity on this issue is one of the more effective action in order to enhance the co-ordination across central government departments, across provinces and regions, and between government and civil society, as requested by the Guidelines on Integrated National Strategies for the Protection of Children from Violence.

In conclusion, I’d like to thank you again the Council of Europe for the great effort made for giving common orientation to the States through the programme “Building a Europe for and with children”. This programme represents a great opportunity to create synergies between the Governments in the challenging global strategy for eradicating all forms of violence against children.