

## Cross Regional Meeting for Advancing the Protection of Children from Violence

Jamaica, June 30 – July 1, 2014

### Conclusions and recommendations

We, the Representatives of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Council of the Baltic States, the Council of Europe, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the League of Arab States, MERCOSUR and the Latin-American and Caribbean Movement for Children (MMILAC), participating in the meeting promoted by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children (SRSG on VAC) and hosted by the Government of Jamaica in co-operation of UNICEF;

Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and welcoming the recent strengthening of the international legal framework on children's rights through the entry into force of the Third Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure, the increase in the number of ratifications to the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, as well as the adoption of significant legal standards, such as the United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and regional Conventions on the protection of children from violence, such as the Lanzarote Convention on the protection of children from sexual violence and the Istanbul Convention on violence against women and domestic violence ;

Recognizing the significant challenges which continue to hamper the implementation of the CRC, including the protection of children from violence, as well as the opportunity to accelerate progress at the international, regional and national levels in the realization of children's rights;

Stressing the crucial importance of promoting the inclusion of the protection of girls and boys from violence as a core dimension of the global development agenda beyond 2015 and welcoming the SRSG leading advocacy role in this respect;

Recognizing the critical role played by Regional Organizations and Institutions as catalysts of progress for the promotion of enhanced accountability for children's rights, including right to freedom from violence and acknowledging the value of pursuing cooperation with civil society and child-led organisations;

Valuing the SRSG support to the strengthening of regional processes and initiatives, and to enhancing cross-regional and South-South cooperation, as well as to the promotion and monitoring of progress towards the full implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children;

Noting with appreciation the platform for dialogue and communication initiated and facilitated by the SRSG with Regional Organizations and Institutions as an important mechanism, in the framework of the United Nations, to share knowledge and good practices, facilitate cross-fertilization of experiences, coordinate efforts, enhance synergies, identify trends and anticipate future challenges and contribute to accelerating progress in children's protection from violence;

Gathered to assess progress achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children in our respective regions and to reinforce our co-operation in the prevention and elimination of violence against children, in particular in early childhood;

Recognizing that early childhood is the period during which children experience the most rapid process of growth and development and during which children's path is shaped;

Further recognizing that young children are particularly vulnerable to violence, being less able to communicate their suffering and seek support, and being at special risk of enduring irreversible damage in their emotional and physical health and development;

Aware of the high return of investment in early childhood initiatives and prevention of violence, and recognizing the social cost of inaction;

Welcoming the contribution of Regional Organizations and Institutions to the prevention and elimination of violence against young children;

- Stress the importance of further promoting the ratification and implementation of key international legal instruments, in particular the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols respectively on children involvement in armed conflict, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on a communications procedure;
- Reaffirm our commitment to support the SRSG in her efforts to increase the visibility and impact of violence on children's rights, as well as of the measures necessary to prevent it and address it as a matter of urgency;
- Reiterate our determination to continue to address the prevention and elimination of violence against children as a core feature in the agenda of our organizations and of states in our region, as well as of our advocacy in multilateral fora;
- Express our commitment to continue to support initiatives to build a culture of respect for children's rights and freedom from violence and to promote cross-fertilization of regional experiences, good practices and lessons learned in the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children;
- Recognize the importance of including violence in early childhood as a key concern in policy and legal frameworks at national, regional and international levels;
- Agree to further support the prevention and reduction of violence against young children, in particular through:
  - **The mobilization of strong political engagement** to end impunity and to prevent and reduce violence against young children, including through the promotion of law reform to ban all forms of violence against children including corporal punishment, effective monitoring mechanisms and integrated, multi-sectoral national integrated strategies

with specific goals and programmes focusing on early childhood including in situations of emergency and conflict ;

- **the promotion of policies and initiatives aiming at supporting families and caregivers** in their child-rearing responsibilities, including through a responsive national social protection and child protection system to strengthen families’ capacity to raise young children in a safe, caring and loving environment, to prevent child abandonment and placement in residential care, and to promote the social inclusion of all young children, in particular those at special risk;
  - **the promotion of affordable, accessible, and quality child friendly services and child-sensitive support to young children** through well-resourced institutions and services and well-trained professionals, taking into account children’s perceptions, experiences and participation in the light of their evolving capacities with a view to identify early signals of violence and neglect and to supporting the children and families concerned
  - **the strengthening of strategic partnerships with relevant stakeholders** (such as the media, the ICT sector, religious leaders and the corporate sector in general) to raise the profile of early childhood initiatives in the public opinion; to widen social awareness about the high return of investment in early childhood initiatives and the social cost of inaction; and to promote a change in attitudes that condone violence against young children, including when pursued in the form of violent discipline or harmful practices.
- Agree to cooperate in the promotion of strategic initiatives to support investment in Early Childhood development, prevention of violence against children and domestic violence and support to positive parenting. We agree in particular to:
    - Promote awareness about the importance of Early Childhood Development, about positive discipline and the negative impact of violence on the child’s development, well-being and future life;
    - document existing studies, policies, laws and other initiatives to support assist families in their child rearing responsibilities, positive parenting and prevent the abandonment and institutionalization of children below the age of three in our respective regions and institutions;
    - share good practices and results of evidence based programmes, as well as strategic materials to advance this agenda, including training toolkits, and awareness raising and child friendly resources;
    - gather and analyze data on violence against children in early childhood, and promote research, including evaluation of existing initiatives;
    - consider organizing expert consultations and other events on violence prevention in early childhood and positive parenting including focus on the role of fathers, with participation of partners from other regions;

- encourage national stakeholders to promote initiatives, such as parliamentary debates and public hearings to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood development and to foster networking and trigger action;
  - report back on progress achieved in the 2015 Cross Regional Round Table;
- Express gratitude to the Government of Jamaica for hosting the 2014 Cross-Regional Round Table on Violence against Children and for its crucial contribution to the meeting;
- Welcome the invitation conveyed by the Council of Europe to host in 2015 a Cross-Regional Consultation in Strasbourg, France.