

Human Rights Council resolution 31/7 on the rights of the child – Response of the Slovak Republic

The Slovak Republic as the state party to the **Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Optional protocol on a communications procedure and of the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse**, acknowledges its obligations under these international treaties. Their coherent implementation leans not only the Convention's and the Optional Protocols' articles per se, but also the Committee's general comments, observations and recommendations.

The crucial interdepartmental tool for fulfilling obligations stemming from the Convention, its Optional Protocols as well as from the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is the **National Reform Programme 2016, the National Action Plan for Children for the years 2013 – 2017, the National Strategy for the Protection of Children against Violence and the National Strategy for youth for the years 2014 – 2020**.

In its Program Manifesto the Government of the Slovak Republic guarantees to support value-based education that will lead towards the effective and focused prevention of displays of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, extremism, and other forms of intolerance. The Government of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Education adopted several measures for inclusive education. Ministry of Education of Slovakia implemented targeted measures for safeguarding the equal access to education for all nationalities and ethnic groups as well as for marginalized groups. In 2015 Slovakia adopted an amendment of the education act, which improves inclusive education at schools.

The Government of the Slovak Republic also adopted on March 2, 2016 the document „**The Basis of the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development**“ dealing with the most important measures to be taken in order to implement the Agenda 2030 in the Slovak Republic.

**Recently the Slovak Republic is preparing its National Strategy for the implementation of the SDGs.** Until the end of this year the Strategy should be adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic.

An important step in order to implement the Millennium Development Goals in the Slovak Republic was the adoption of the Act No. 176/2015 Coll. on the Commissioner for Children and the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and on amendments and supplements to certain acts which came into effect on 1 September 2015. In December, the National Council of the Slovak Republic elected both commissioners.

The Commissioner for Children is involved in protection of children's rights by supporting and enforcement of rights assigned to children under international treaties by which the Slovak Republic is bound (hereinafter only the "children's rights"). The Commissioner for Children is an independent body performing its competence separately from other authorities having human-rights competencies defined by a special regulation. Everybody has the rights to contact the Commissioner for Children with respect to infringement of children's rights or a threat thereof. A child has the right to contact the Commissioner for Children either directly

or through other person, including without their parents', tutors', guardians' knowledge and/or without informing other persons to whom the child is commissioned into foster care. The Commissioner for Children is also authorised to submit notifications on behalf of a child/children under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure by which the Slovak Republic is bound (e.g. to the Committee on the Rights of the Child).

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (Ministry of Education) organized in cooperation with the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights and the State School inspection a seminar in December 2015. The main goal of the seminar was to spread information about the protection the rights of children in schools and the improvement of the safety of the school environment and about the prevention of negative phenomena.

Ministry of Education organized in April 2016 a workshop for a regional representatives of the education sector within the model of prevention and protection of children from violence, where several international commitments of Slovakia and the recommendations of the international organizations, including the final recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child about involvement of children in armed conflict have been presented.

Kenya and South Sudan are among the main territorial priorities of the Slovak development cooperation. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic have implemented a number of very relevant projects containing a strong women and girls empowerment component as well as a child protection one. For example, a project in the Langas slum of the City of Eldoret, Rift Valley, Kenya. Young girls who have previously been victims of sexual or other violence are offered refuge in a rehabilitation centre for 2 years, where they learn cooking, child care and basic household jobs. Attached to the rehabilitation centre, there is a vocational training centre, where mainly single mothers are trained to become tailors or hairdressers and they are also taught basic computer skills in order to be more successful as entrepreneurs or on the job market.

Another good example is project of providing pediatric care in Gordiy in the Republic of South Sudan. This project solves the problem of lack of health infrastructure in the region Gordo, where the target groups are mainly children and mothers. Many of the diseases that commonly occur in the area are easily (and cheaply) treatable or preventable by vaccination and hygienic principles but residents have little access to medical assistance and relevant information. The overall objective is therefore to improve the level of health, with special emphasis on children and parents, making quality health and preventive pediatric care. In practice, there will be the establishment of a functioning clinic and pediatric vaccination center, to which will be built complementary capacity of local staff (not just health workers but also community workers), moreover, will be carried out a campaign to disseminate information on the prevention of diseases in children, rational nutrition and hygiene.

Third example might be the project of the high school, quality education and gain practical skills for youth in the countryside on the island of Rusinga. Objective of the project is to

promote quality education and health care for the inhabitants of an isolated island of Rusinga. Within this project health centre and a secondary school with a dormitory for boys and girls was built, with school focuses primarily on working with IT, building practical skills and professional qualifications in the field of agriculture and fish farming. All ongoing activities are a continuation of a comprehensive project - gradual expansion of the community centre that has been operating since 2005. In addition to the main target groups of children and youth, the contractor also focuses on primary and secondary schools through continuing their capacity building and implementation of innovative teaching methods.

Slovakia announced this year the very first call for proposals for the humanitarian projects focused on the education in emergencies to be provided in the refugee settlements in Syria and its neighbouring countries (in the total amount of 855 000 euro). Slovakia have also introduced a special scholarship programme for students from Syria to attend tertiary education at universities in Slovakia and are planning to continue in this effort in the future (in years 2016-2021 we will also provide 550 university scholarships).

One of the main priorities of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU within the humanitarian aid is to take into account specific needs of children affected by disasters and conflicts, especially when it comes to education. The launch of the Education Cannot Wait Fund at the World Humanitarian Summit is also much appreciated by the Slovak Republic.

As the Slovak Presidency in the Council of the European Union we attach great importance to the issue of empowerment of women and girls as well. Women and girls are often disproportionately negatively affected by humanitarian crises, in terms of casualties, social and economic inequality, as well as gender-based violence. Women and girls are often amongst the first responders to crises and their contributions towards recovery are undisputable.

As part of the Slovak EU Presidency, Slovakia organized workshop on protection of women and girls in emergencies in October 2016 in Brussels at the presence of the representatives from various NGOs, INGOs, UN organizations and EU Member States.

In relation to the **independent monitoring mechanisms** of children's rights implementation, the Slovak Republic has followed recommendations of the public defender of rights and has taken several legislative and non-legislative measures to enhance the principle of non-discrimination in fulfilling children's rights. Furthermore, the Slovak Republic has adopted the act on the commissioner for children and the commissioner for persons with disabilities and established a distinct entity for monitoring the implementation of children's rights, for handling and investigating complaints from children and in their name. The first commissioner for children was elected by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in November 2015.

**Non-governmental organisations** with a long-standing expertise in the field of children's rights are among significant stakeholders in advocacy, provision of services for children and young people, as well as education of children and adults in general and more specific topics pertaining to children's rights. Cooperation of state entities and non-governmental

organisations evolves in both policy-making and realisation of particular steps and activities on the local ground.

**International cooperation** - The Slovak Republic highly appreciates the opportunity of the international dialogue and cooperation within the United Nations, the Council of Europe, OSCE and the European Union and welcomes them in enhancing its efforts towards a more effective implementation of the commitments and towards an improvement of lives of all children in Slovakia.

The Slovak Republic is active in the protection and promotion of children's rights and report on all the activities to the international community in this field.