

Address of Mr. Andrzej Sadoś
Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland
to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
at Expert Consultation
on promoting and protecting the rights of children working and/or living on the street:
Bridging the gaps between policy and practice

1 November 2011

Ladies and gentleman,

Firstly I would like to sincerely welcome all the distinguished panelists and participants including government representatives, representatives of United Nations agencies, members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, special procedures mandate holders, civil society organizations and members of academia at this important event.

Let me express my sincere gratitude to the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights for organizing this consultation. The role of the Office is crucial to ensure continuity and coherence of the efforts to successfully tackle human rights challenges. It is essential that the Office could carry out its work in full independence and with proper funding.

The Human Rights Council resolution 16/12 entitled *Rights of the child: a holistic approach to the protection and promotion of the rights of children working and/or living on the street*, which was presented jointly by the EU and GRULAC enjoyed an unprecedented level of support in terms of co-sponsorship during the March session. I would like especially commend the excellent cooperation with the Group of Latin American countries on that issue. Let me at this place, welcome all the efforts of the governments, UN entities, religious groups, civil society organizations, and tireless engagement of so many individuals in reducing the number of children working and/or living in the streets.

We appreciate the fact, that by holding the annual full-day meeting devoted to the situation of children working and/or living on the street and by adopting the resolution 16/12 the Human Rights Council brought to the attention of the wider international community the perpetuating situation of such children who are exposed to all forms of violence, discrimination and abuse in their everyday life. Often stigmatized and marginalized, used for sexual and economic exploitation, harassed by the police, compelled to survival behaviours, such as begging, or simply overlooked by the passers-by, these children belong to the most vulnerable group in society and need special attention, protection and assistance from their families, communities and as part of national efforts and international cooperation.

The scale and global range of this phenomenon are deeply disturbing. We share the assessment that the prevention of the phenomenon of children working and/or living on the street, as well as protection of these children and their effective reintegration into the society

must constitute a part of a holistic child-rights response that States should undertake without delay within the context of their domestic child protection strategies.

Universal and free birth registration, compulsory and free for all primary education, effective prosecution of the sale and trafficking of children, access of all children without discrimination to health care and other basic services, support to families and appropriate alternative care should all be part of such response, with the meaningful participation of children themselves and taking into account the best interests of the child.

Moreover, the efficient countering the phenomenon is seriously impeded by the lack of recent and comprehensive data regarding the magnitude of the challenge of street children. Therefore it is encouraged, that the States develop, strengthen and implement systematic disaggregated national data collection on street children so as to develop effective measures for prevention and intervention.

We are of the opinion, that in order to successfully tackle this issue, national efforts should be supplemented by an enhanced international co-operation and coordination. We therefore welcome all the efforts that are designed to develop and deepen such collaboration and we reiterate that on the global scale the crucial role in that regard, is to be played by the United Nations.

The resolution 16/12 requested the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct, in collaboration with States, relevant mandate holders, UN bodies and agencies, civil society and children themselves, a study on challenges, lessons learnt and best practices in the protection and promotion of the rights of children working and/or living on the street, and to present it to the 19th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2012.

Those consultations are meant to support OHCHR in preparing of the above mentioned study. We believe that the panelists' contributions and discussions taking place in the course of the coming two days will be for all of you inspiring and enriching and that the significant improvements on the ground will finally be achieved.

Thank you,