



**Director General's Statement
Celebrating the Universal Children's Day 2016
and the 27th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

In line with the commitments enshrined in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and in celebration of the [Universal Children's Day \(resolution 836\(IX\)\)](#), I am honoured to take this occasion to present the most recent activities of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), which contribute to the advancement of the rights of the child.

Upholding children's rights is the obligation of all CBSS Member States and is a key topic for the CBSS during its Icelandic Presidency 2016-2017. Through the Expert Group on Children at Risk, the CBSS is leading key initiatives – *grounded on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* - which together take a holistic approach to protecting children from all forms of violence, with particular emphasis on preventing sexual abuse and exploitation, including trafficking.

The Icelandic Barnahus model puts the child's story at the centre of investigations of violence against children. It is an innovation in promoting child-friendly and multidisciplinary mechanisms for the prevention of and responses to child abuse and comprehensive services to child victims. The several exchange meetings organized under the [PROMISE Project](#), which is led by the CBSS and co-funded by the European Commission, have created a movement to establish Barnahus or similar models throughout Europe. I trust that this momentum will gain strength on 28-29 November 2016, when more than 60 professionals from around Europe will meet in [Linköping, Sweden](#) to gather inspiration to launch this innovation in their own countries.

In light of the current state of affairs, asylum-seeking and unaccompanied children deserve a special focus. Prioritizing the cooperation among different authorities and across sectors will be crucial in preventing abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children. I am looking forward to hosting two upcoming meetings in December linked to this topic. In cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers, the first is an expert meeting and training on the prevention of exploitation and trafficking of children on the move. In cooperation with the Central European Initiative, the second is a conference on good practices in protecting unaccompanied children and finding solutions for the children and their families, societies and states. Together these efforts contribute to the important discussions around ensuring the safety of children on the move and establish a high standard of exchanging best practices and positive messages between regions.

It takes a village to ensure the safety and well-being of children in order to create a healthier and safer society, and the CBSS village is getting larger by the day. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the staff at the Secretariat, the senior officials of the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk, and the many partners and participants who dedicate their time and passion to furthering children's rights. Seeing this progress gives me hope that the Baltic Sea Region will be the first to reach the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goal](#) number 16: ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

To conclude, there are many challenges in the Baltic Sea Region and around the world that threaten children's rights. The urgency with which we must act makes upholding their rights as provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child more important than ever.