



## Director General's Statement

### **Celebrating the Universal Children's Day 2017 and the 28th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

**“There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul  
than the way in which it treats its children.”**

***Nelson Mandela***

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 yet again this occasion to present the most recent activities and achievements of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and its Expert Group on Children at Risk which contributes to the advancement of the rights of the child.

Upholding children's rights is the obligation of all CBSS Member States and was a key priority during the CBSS Icelandic Presidency. The launching of the European Barnahus Movement in June 2017 in Brussels was a milestone of the Icelandic Presidency and will serve as guiding light for the promotion of the Barnahus for years to come.

During the Swedish CBSS Presidency 2017 – 2018, the promotion of children's rights is prioritised vis-a-vis the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Sweden has long been a forerunner in many children's rights issues: it has been amongst the first countries to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and plans to make it part of Swedish law by 2020. Moreover, in 1979 Sweden became the first country to ban corporal punishment of children in all settings.

Sweden's guidance and leadership feature strongly in the newly launched project “Non-violent childhoods: moving on from corporal punishment in the Baltic Sea region.” The project promotes the elimination of corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading punishments of children through the changing of the mindset and public opinion at large. The initiative will systemize the experiences in the Baltic Sea Region countries in transforming traditional attitudes with a wide range of target groups such as families, children, communities and policymakers as well as with the media and faith-based organisations. The results and guidelines developed in the project are expected to benefit all countries – and on a global level – which have a ban on corporal punishment in all settings.

Having this in mind, I am proud that the Baltic Sea Region is close to becoming a non-corporal punishment zone with 10 out of 11 countries in the region implementing legislation and policies against corporal punishment of children.

The work to reach this goal, however, demands consistent progress and nimble response to new challenges. To ensure broad outreach, the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk engages a wide range of partners such as Ministries, the Nordic Council of Ministers, Save the Children, the St. Petersburg-based NGO Stellit, and many more. Together, they fight against abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and violence against children and for reaching the UN SDG No. 16.

The next years will be crucial for the advancement of the rights of the child. Thanks to the staff at the Secretariat, the senior officials of the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk, and the many partners and participants, I believe the CBSS can sustain the European Barnahus Movement and see the legal ban on corporal punishment of children transformed into real and sustainable actions.