



Director General's Statement
Celebrating the Universal Children's Day 2018 and the 29th 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 highlight in particular this year's high-level Conference in Stockholm on the implementing the ban of corporal punishment, and the many more activities 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.

Under the CBSS Latvian Presidency 2018-2019, the promotion of children's rights is prioritised vis-à-vis the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and under the Presidency's priority "Responsibility".

The high-level conference organised by the Council of the Baltic Sea States and co-hosted by the Swedish Government in cooperation with the Special Representative of the UN Violence against Children served as a bridge between the High-Level Global Conferences on the Universal Prohibition of Corporal Punishment in Malta 2018 and in Tunisia 2020. It was also a milestone for the CBSS and its work with the rights of the child, taking responsibility and creating a better presence and future for the children in our region and beyond.

Sweden - the host country for our Secretariat – was the first country in the world to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings in 1979, and thereby introducing a totally new standard. Today, 54 countries have a legal ban, and are implementing it - and many more countries are in the process of enacting a legal prohibition and can look at the Baltic Sea Region as a model region: 10 out of 11 countries have prohibited corporal punishment in all settings including in the home. Nearly all the countries in the Baltic Sea Region have furthermore taken part in the Non-violent Childhoods Programme aiming at strengthening the awareness and efforts, and led by the CBSS Children at Risk Unit.

Through the Expert Group on Children at Risk, the CBSS is leading many more key initiatives – grounded on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – which together take a holistic approach to protect children from all forms of violence, with emphasis on preventing abuse and exploitation, including trafficking.

The cooperation between the CBSS and the Nordic Council of Ministers culminated this year in the adoption of the Oslo Conclusions on Identifying Children at Risk of Exploitation and Trafficking, promoting a reorientation of action, where addressing violence and exploitation of children in all its forms becomes a first step to prevent and identify child victims of trafficking.

Also, since its launch in 2017, the Barnahus Model has been validated as a widely accepted concept and consolidated the European network of Barnahus staff and interested government officials and practitioners. Now in its second project phase, PROMISE is promoting progress at national level in several European countries and taking bigger steps towards providing child victims and witnesses of violence in Europe with child-friendly interventions and rapid access to justice and care.

To conclude, we are in a positive flow at the moment, but many challenges remain not only in our region. This said, the staff at the Secretariat, the senior officials of the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk, and the many partners and participants will continue supporting national implementation promoting children's rights and efforts made for children to grow up without violence, but dignity and kindness.

