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Item 3: Annual Full-Day Discussion on the Rights of the Child, “Information and Communications Technology and Child Sexual Exploitation”

Mr. President,

The International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE) and Nobody’s Children Foundation (NCF) would like to commend the panelists for their contributions.

In 2004, NCF launched in Poland a national campaign called **“You never know who is on the other side”** addressing the problem of online grooming. In 2010, as a response to the long-awaited amendment to the Polish Penal Code, concerning penalization of online grooming, the campaign was reinforced and extended as **“Every step online leaves a trace”**. NCF also launched the campaign **“I think, therefore I don’t send”** to address within the media the problem of sexting among youth. As part of the Ministry of Education’s national program “We protect children”, NCF initiated systemic solutions in schools across the country. In the field of online safety and new technologies, these solutions include three main processes: education and capacity building (of professionals working with children and youth, education of children and youth and parents), implementation of procedures of responding and support (towards victims, perpetrators and bystanders), and construction of secure internet/Wi-Fi infrastructures on the school premises. In addition, NCF operates two helplines: 116 111 for children and youth, and 800 100 100 for parents and professionals experiencing safety concerns about children that allow for detection of abuse and support of children and youth.

Between October 2014 and October 2015, 159 online grooming cases were reported to the children and youth helpline. As a result, the number of initiated proceedings and recorded crimes has gradually increased. From only 34 cases for initiated proceedings and 6 recorded crimes reported in 2010, statistics reached 156 for initiated proceedings and 129 recorded crimes in 2014, an increase of 53% and 75% respectively in four years.

As for sexting, research conducted in 2014 by NCF showed that 11% of young people sent sexually explicit or sexually suggestive materials, while one-third of the respondents received such materials (photos or recordings).

Our organizations would like to insist on the crucial contribution of the ICT industry for the protection of children from abuse online. We therefore call on the Polish government to **develop a mandatory self regulatory framework for private sector companies dealing with internet, and a systematic sexual abuse track system to facilitate investigations and prosecutions, as well as online prevention mechanisms to alert children about risks and on how they can get help and report abuse**. In addition, the Operational Programme Digital Poland 2014-2020 should **further integrate schools as key State institutions to benefit from the program, and effective awareness and sensitization courses that associate parents**.

In conclusion, we urge the Polish government to **harmonize its domestic legislation with the Lanzarote Convention as well as the opinion on article 23 and its explanatory note adopted by the Lanzarote Committee on 17 June 2015**.

Thank you Mr. President.