



## 34<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

GENEVA, 27 FEBRUARY – 24 MARCH 2017

### ITEM 3: INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SALE OF CHILDREN, CHILD PROSTITUTION AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY (MISSION TO GEORGIA), A/HRC/34/55/Add.1

Mr. President,

*BICE, Public Health Foundation of Georgia, European Centre for Law and Justice, Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice (IIMA), International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development (VIDES), Compagny of Daughters of Charity of Vincent de Paul, International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and International Movement of Apostolate in the Independent Social Milieus (MIAMSI)*, would like to thank the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography for her report and recommendations following her visit to Georgia last year. Our organisations appreciate the issues raised, including the root causes of sexual abuse and exploitation, especially via information and communications technologies, the role of the helpline and the referral mechanism as well as the care, recovery and reintegration services.

Indeed, as pointed out by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)<sup>1</sup> a month ago, the limited implementation of the child referral mechanism and the limited coverage of counseling services for children, are directly linked to the limited number of statutory social workers as well as the limited geographic coverage underlined also by the Special Rapporteur. Whilst the 12 September 2016 Decree on the new Child Protection Referral Mechanism mandated social workers to evaluate risky situations and decide on the removal of a child from a violent family environment<sup>2</sup>, the lack of appropriate resources to adequately run the “Identification and prevention of violent and behavioral disorder” program, and the paucity of social workers do not allow for proper, timely and effective handling and monitoring of child abuse and violence cases.

In addition, despite sexual abuse is a nation-wide spread phenomenon as documented by the 2012 UNICEF study, the identification of child victims continues to be very complicate, including within his/her circle of trust. In rural and highland regions, the limited access to the toll-free helpline leads to underreported cases of child abuse, violence and exploitation, including online abuse due to the absence of the Digital Evidence Research Unit.

Whilst our organizations welcome the efforts undertaken<sup>3</sup>, we recommend Georgia to:

1. **Recruit and train social workers and enable them to carry out identification, referral, care, recovery and reintegration endeavors;**
2. **Run a nationwide awareness campaign on the procedures, services and objectives of the referral mechanism so as to sensitize parents, children, teachers, health officials, governmental institutions and their structural units, local municipalities and the population as a whole, including in highland regions;**
3. **Develop further the Social Service Agency activities in the Adjara Region, at the Black Sea coast where sexual tourism prevails;**
4. **Establish a Digital Evidence Research Unit.**

Question: *How does the Special Rapporteur intend to follow-up and monitor the recommendations issued and how Georgian and international civil society organizations can contribute to that process?*

Thank you Mr. President.

<sup>1</sup> CRC/C/GEO/CO/4 (2017), §§ 20-24.

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/32/NGO/153. See also BICE-PHFG alternative report to the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, §§ 27, 41, 43, 46 b) and e), 50 b); A/HRC/32/NGO/32 (2016), § 7-13. See also the oral statement delivered by BICE and PHFG during the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council (Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. 2016 amendments to the Law on Combating Domestic Violence; 2016 Pilot program on “Identification and prevention of violent and behavioral disorder”; 12 September 2016 Decree related to the new Child Protection Referral Mechanism; 2015 Revision of the social assistance system; June 2015 Juvenile Justice Code.