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STATEMENT

by

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Item 64: Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children

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Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset, let me congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to lead the work of this committee. I wish to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation for the continued work undertaken by the United Nations in the protection and promotion of the rights of children. I would like to commend the Secretary General for the reports presented under this Agenda Item.

Slovakia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by Belgium on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Chairperson,

Slovakia reiterates its strong belief, shared by the international community, in legal value and moral appeal of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this regard, my delegation encourages all States that have not yet done so to join in furthering the legal protection of children by ratifying or acceding to the Convention and the Protocols and calls for a full and unconditional application of these legal instruments.

Slovakia recognizes the efforts of UNICEF and the Committee on the Rights of the Child in promoting the commitments contained in the Convention as well as the valuable contribution of the NGO community towards improvement of children's lives.

Mr. Chairperson,

Speaking about implementation let me draw your attention to a very urgent matter. There is ample evidence from the reporting process under the Convention that the rights of millions of children are not respected and that legal obligations are in many cases not being fulfilled. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the only core international human rights treaty with a mandatory reporting procedure which does not have in addition a communications procedure. We do believe that the lack of the communications procedure weakens effective implementation of the Convention.

While children and their representatives can use the mechanisms already established under other international instruments to pursue some of their rights those instruments do not cover separately or together the full range and specificities of rights for children set out in the Convention. Other vulnerable groups of population - women, people with disabilities and migrant workers - all have communications procedures allowing petitions to be considered by a specialist committee. The communications procedure under the CRC would allow children's issues to be considered by "their" specialist Committee on the Rights of the Child. It would also highlight and help to stimulate the development of more effective national and regional systems for remedies.

Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me to recall that last year, at its 11th session, Slovakia was one of the main sponsors of the resolution by which the Human Rights Council decided to establish an Open-ended Working Group to explore the possibility of elaborating an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to provide a communications procedure complementary to the reporting procedure under the Convention. By its resolution 13/3 adopted on 24 March 2010 the Council decided to extend the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group and requested the Working Group to elaborate an optional protocol to the Convention. The resolution also requested the Chairman of the Working Group to prepare a proposal for a draft optional protocol. The English version of the draft was circulated to all Member States in August this year. The draft should be available soon in all UN official languages. We fully support the work done so far by the Chairperson-Rapporteur and we do hope that the Working Group will successfully fulfill its very important mandate. I would like to encourage UN member states to actively participate in the initiative to elaborate this new optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and help to achieve our shared goal which is to listen to children and grant them the respect and attention they deserve.

Thank you.