

THE STOCKHOLM CALL FOR ACTION

*NGO Statement to the EU Member States at the meeting of the
Permanent Intergovernmental Group L'Europe de l'Enfance
20 November 2009*

NGO Statement to the EU Member States

This year, 2009, we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the most widely recognised human rights treaty with ratifications from 193 of **the world's states**.

There are more than 100 million children, aged 18 or younger, living in the European Union as well as an unknown number of undocumented children. The EU and its Member States have an important role to play to ensure that all children enjoy the same rights and protection, regardless of what state they reside in.

EU Member States have already taken some important steps towards this, most significantly article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty introduces the **protection of children's rights among the EU's objective for its internal and external policies**. This is a positive measure, as it provides the basis for the EU to implement effective **measures to ensure that children's rights, including the 'best interest of the child', are taken into account or mainstreamed in all relevant policy areas**.

We welcome the adoption of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in 2000, in particular Article 24, which includes references to the **best interests of the child, the protection and care of children, children's participation** and the right to family life. We welcome the fact that the Charter will be binding on almost all Member States with the Lisbon Treaty.

We endorse the **setting up of l'Europe de l'Enfance**. The creation of this Ministerial group demonstrates the recognition from Member States that **children's rights and child protection has** a cross border dimension and Member States must cooperate at an EU level.

We welcome the instruments, programmes and funding schemes the Member States as well as the EU institutions have adopted to promote and protect **children's rights over the two decades** since the adoption of the UNCRC.

With this statement, we, the NGO community working for children's rights in Europe, both in Member States, candidate and potential candidate countries as well as neighbouring countries, have highlighted 10 key issues which Member States should focus on for the next 20 years, to ensure that the rights set out in the UNCRC are fulfilled for all children residing in the European Union.

The full text of this statement, which also includes a number of recommendations for EU institutions, can be found in Appendix I.

A summary of a report ("**You could always begin by listening to us**") on children's own views of what the EU should focus on is included in Appendix II. Many of the issues included in the statement are based on the views from this report.

We, the undersigned child rights NGOs and NGO coalitions in Europe, call on the EU Member States to:

1. Ensure that the EU meets its obligation under international human rights law to **promote and protect children's rights** by using the new strengthened basis created in article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty, to take **children's rights into account** in relevant Council decisions and debates with direct or indirect impacts on children, fully considering the impact of decisions on the lives of children in Europe and elsewhere;
2. Ensure that the EU takes **specific action** to support the fulfillment of **children's rights by: making the EU the first region in the world free from violence against children**, by encouraging national legislation banning all forms of degrading and humiliating treatment of children, including corporal punishment in the home; ensuring that EU asylum, migration and trafficking policies and legislation are designed to take into account the best interest of the child and ensure that all children benefit from their rights without discrimination; collaborate to eradicate poverty and social exclusion among children; take all measures possible to combat discrimination against children, in particular children belonging to minorities, such as Romani children, and children with disabilities;
3. Ensure that **children are involved** at the local and national level in debates and in discussions on EU matters relevant to them. It is essential that their views are taken into account in the work of the Council bodies;
4. Ensure that the EU takes a serious role in promoting children's rights to other institutions and states, including the UN, and develop its **collaboration with key child rights actors in Europe** such as the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the Council of Europe and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child;
5. Recognise the important **role played by civil society organisations** at local, national and regional level, and ensure that resources are allocated to their work to promote, protect and respect the rights of the child;
6. Ensure that the **Stockholm Programme**, including its action plan, recognise that all **EU measures must respect and promote children's rights as set out in the UNCRC and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**. Where an EU policy specifically addresses or has an impact on the situation of vulnerable children, the EU must ensure that its **actions secure children's rights to protection**, by placing child protection concerns at the very centre of policy development;
7. Call on the new Commission to develop and adopt a **comprehensive EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**, covering both EU internal and external affairs in 2010, including structures for monitoring the actions taken by the EU institutions on children's rights;
8. Ensure that **specific funding is allocated** in EU institutions' budgets for actions and programmes aimed for promoting and protecting **children's rights** in Europe and in external relations;

9. Consider **EU accession, without any reservations**, to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

10. Encourage all Member States to put in place an **independent monitoring mechanism** at national level, such as an Ombudsman for Children, as well as similar mechanisms at a local level, which can answer to individual complaints from children, and support the fostering of collaboration between the different Ombudsman institutions in Europe, e.g. through the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children;

Appendix I

THE STOCKHOLM CALL FOR ACTION

Complete version

NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRC, AUSTRIA; SAVE THE CHILDREN DENMARK; JOINT COUNCIL FOR CHILD ISSUES IN DENMARK; ESTONIAN UNION FOR CHILD WELFARE; SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND; CENTRAL UNION FOR CHILD WELFARE IN FINLAND; SAVE THE CHILDREN GERMANY; NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN GERMANY; CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ALLIANCE, IRELAND; SAVE THE CHILDREN ITALY; DARDEDZE, LATVIA; SAVE THE CHILDREN LITHUANIA; CENTRAL OFFICE, MALTA; SAVE THE CHILDREN NETHERLANDS; NOBODY'S CHILDREN FOUNDATION, POLAND; SAVE THE CHILDREN ROMANIA; SLOVENIAN ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF YOUTH; SAVE THE CHILDREN SPAIN; PLATAFORMA DE ORGANIZACIONES DE INFANCIA, SPAIN; SAVE THE CHILDREN SWEDEN; NGO NETWORK FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, SWEDEN; SAVE THE CHILDREN UK; CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ALLIANCE FOR ENGLAND, UK; SCOTTISH ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS; NSPCC, UK; SAVE THE CHILDREN IN ALBANIA; ALBANIAN COALITION ALL TOGETHER AGAINST CHILD TRAFFICKING (BKTF); **COALITION FOR MONITORING OF CHILD RIGHTS IN BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA; CENTRE FOR SOCIAL POLICY INITIATIVES, CROATIA;** THE COORDINATION OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR CHILDREN, CROATIA; SAVE THE CHILDREN ICELAND; SAVE THE CHILDREN IN KOSOVO; INICIATIVA 6, KOSOVO; KOSOVAR YOUTH COUNCIL; CHILD RIGHTS INFORMATION CENTRE MOLDOVA; CHILD RIGHTS CENTRE MONTENEGRO; SAVE THE CHILDREN NORWAY (SEE PROGRAMME); ANTI-DISCRIMINATION CENTRE MEMORIAL, RUSSIA; CHILD RIGHTS CENTRE BELGRADE, SERBIA; SAVE THE CHILDREN SWITZERLAND; ANKARA CHILD RIGHTS PLATFORM, TURKEY; CHIRIKLY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION, UKRAINE; EVERYCHILD, UKRAINE; INTERNATIONAL BABY FOOD ACTION NETWORK (IBFAN) SUMY, UKRAINE; **WOMEN'S CONSORTIUM OF UKRAINE;** EUROPEAN NGO ALLIANCE FOR CHILD SAFETY ONLINE (ENACSO)

- Bearing in mind the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child and the Optional Protocols thereto, adopted 20 years ago at the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989, as well as the UN Secretary-**General's Study on Violence against Children**, presented to the UN General Assembly on 11 October 2006;
- Having regard to Article 6(2) on the respect for human rights of the Treaty on European Union;
- Taking into account Article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty which states that the Union *'shall combat (...) discrimination and shall promote (...) protection of the rights of the child', and specifies that 'in its relations with the wider world, the Union shall (...) contribute to (...) the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child'*;

- Recalling Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights which contains **specific provisions on the rights of the child and states 'that all actions relating to children, whether taken by public or private institutions, the child's best interests must be a primary consideration'** and which will gain binding force as was decided by the European Council closing the IGC in Lisbon on 19 October 2007;
- Having regard to the regular meetings of the intergovernmental high-level group of representatives of the Member States responsible for childhood policies, '**l'Europe de l'Enfance', meeting since 2002;**
- Observing the establishment of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency¹, which has as one of the priorities within the multi-annual framework to work on the implementation of **children's rights**, including the establishment of the Fundamental Rights Platform for representatives of civil society in 2008;
- Taking due account to the progress of the Member States and the EU **institutions to integrate children's rights into EU internal and external affairs**, including the adoption of specific instruments, development of programmes and establishment of funding schemes;
- **Considering the Eurobarometer Analytical Report 'The Rights of the Child' of April 2008,**
 - A. Whereas the 100 million children, as well as a large number of undocumented children, who reside in the territory of the European Union still do not all enjoy the same, universal protection of their rights as it is dependent on the member State they live in;
 - B. Whereas the European Court of Justice and the Fundamental Rights Agency has stated that according to article 6.2 of the Treaty of the European Union, the EU must respect the rights of the child as stipulated in the UNCRC when applying community law and taking other actions;
 - C. Whereas approximately 19 million children live at risk of poverty in the EU;
 - D. Whereas the WHO estimated that almost 53,000 children died worldwide in 2002 as a result of homicide² and 80 to 98 per cent of children worldwide suffer physical punishment in their homes and much violence against children remains hidden for reasons of fear, societal acceptance and lack of safe or trusted ways for children and adults to report on it according to the **UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children**;

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 168/2007 of 15 February 2007, OJ L 53, 22.2.2007, p.1.

² *Global Estimates of Health Consequences due to Violence against Children*. Background paper for the UN Study on Violence Against Children (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2006).

- E. Whereas large groups of ethnic minority children, in particular Roma children, face discrimination on a daily basis, especially in regards to their rights to access to education, health care and adequate housing;

We, members of the NGO community in Europe working to promote and protect the rights of all children as stated in the UNCRC, believe that, in order to ensure a coherent implementation of children's rights in the European Union, structured co-operation between all actors, including Member States, the EU institutions, the civil society and children, is essential.

Therefore, we, civil society representatives, commit to:

1. Listen to children from all groups, including the most vulnerable, take their views into account and involve them in our daily work;
2. Speak out for children with a strong and united voice, when children themselves cannot do so;
3. Share our experiences from working directly with children to decision-makers at national and regional level; and monitor progress of **implementation of children's rights** instruments at local, national and regional level and report our findings to relevant bodies
4. **Develop new methods to protect children's rights**, including how to involve children in decision making;
5. Collaborate with national and local bodies to increase the awareness of **children's rights among the general public;**

At the same time, we call on the Member States and the European Council to:

General Measures of Implementation

1. Ratify, without reservations, the international legal instruments relevant to children, including:
 - o The Optional Protocols to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (2000) and withdraw any reservations which they have entered into the relation to the UNCRC (1989)
 - o ILO Conventions No:s 138 of 1973 (Minimum Age) and 182 of 1999 (Worst Forms of Child Labour)
 - o UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
 - o The European Social Charter (revised, 1996)
 - o European Convention on the Legal Status of Children born out of Wedlock (1975)
 - o European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions concerning Custody of Children and on the Restoration of Custody to Children (1989)
 - o **European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights** (1996)
 - o Council of Europe Convention on Cyber Crime (2001)
 - o Council of Europe Convention on Contact concerning Children (2003)
 - o Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005)
 - o Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007)
 - o European Convention on the Adoption of Children (revised, 2008)

- Hague Convention on inter-country adoption (1993)
 - Hague Convention on the International Protection of Children (1996)
2. Once the Lisbon Treaty enters into force on 1 December 2009 accede to, the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the (revised) European Social Charter and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
 3. **Appoint a 'Thematic Coordinator on Children' in the Council of Ministers to provide overall leadership and deal with both internal and external EU issues;**
 4. **Ensure that children's rights are mainstreamed into decision making and actions by all EU institutions and agencies, including the Council, the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Fundamental Rights Agency;**
 5. Appoint, for those Member States who have not done so, an independent national Ombudsman for Children³, as well as similar mechanisms at local level;
 6. Ensure sufficient financial and human resources for the implementation of **the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and ensure that children's rights are a priority objective within relevant EU budget lines;**
 7. **Develop further l'Europe de l'Enfance and ensure that this high-level ministerial body is meeting at least once per year and additional meetings at civil servant level take place more regularly; a clear work programme should be developed which includes a returning issue for discussion on the EU Strategy on Children's Rights and its implementation;**
 8. Closely collaborate with the Council of Europe, in relation to its Programme **'Building a Europe for and with children', the European Convention on Human Rights and its Social Charter;**
 9. Develop and strengthen the collaboration with UN and other international and regional bodies, such as the UN treaty monitoring bodies, in particular the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child;
 10. Develop and strengthen the collaboration with civil society organisations and coalitions at local, national and regional level;
 11. Promote awareness raising activities on the UNCRC – taking into account the outcomes of the Euro-**barometer Report on Children's Rights of 2008;**
 12. **Dedicate a European Year for Children's Rights, with a related programme of activities to support it and with a principal aim to raise awareness on children's rights;**

³ An Ombudsman for children should be set up in accordance with the Paris Principles, the ENOC Standards and General Comment no 2 from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Definition of the Child

13. Ensure that the definition of a child as a person below the age of 18 as set out in the UNCRC, is always respected in decision making.
14. Ensure that the minimum age for marriage is 18 years in all countries and that the minimum ages for sexual consent and criminal responsibility are in line with existing child rights standards and interpretation and do not differ too much between the Member States.

General Principles of the UNCRC

15. Ensure that children who face discrimination on the basis of sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation are protected by the EU Directive on non-discrimination and that measures are taken to combat other forms of discrimination of children, e.g. due to social status of children or their parents;
16. Ensure that the best interest of the child is always a paramount consideration when decisions are made which affect an individual child or, children as a group;
17. Ensure that decisions and actions taken do not have a negative impact on **a child's survival and development, including the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, psychological and social development;**
18. Ensure meaningful, ethical and safe child participation on EU matters directly or indirectly affecting children, drawing on the growing range of experience with child participation within the Member States and on the experience and knowledge of existing child and youth networks;

Civil Rights and Freedoms

19. Ensure that Member States develop and strengthen existing mechanisms for cooperation at EU level and work with civil society and industry to combat the existence of illegal and harmful content on the Internet, including online images of child sexual abuse, grooming and bullying, and allocate enough resources to identify victims of child pornography;
20. Develop tools and measures to make use of new technologies to consult with children on matters concerning them;
21. Ensure that all relevant documentation is available in formats that are accessible to children, **taking into account the different stages of children's development** as well as the specific needs of children with disabilities (e.g. translating material into Braille);

Family Environment and Alternative Care

22. Ensure that children without parental care, including children living in institutions, detention centres and foster homes, are protected against

violence and abuse and encourage the process of de-institutionalisation of children by providing alternative solutions;

23. Adopt ambitious national quantified targets to combat child poverty, backed by rigorous national commitments, such as national action plans or strategies, and monitoring of child well-being;
24. Ensure that the groups at most risk of poverty and social exclusion, including children belonging to ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, street children, asylum seeking children and migrant children, are in particular covered by EU and national policies to combat poverty and social exclusion;
25. Ensure that there **is a prominent place for children's participation in** international divorce and separation legal proceedings and ensure the implementation of the Brussels II regulation;
26. Ensure that the best interests of the child are protected, as well as the right to be heard, in child abduction cases;
27. No longer ignore the existence of homeless children and street children and adopt immediate targeted actions to combat the phenomenon of street children, preferably within the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion;

Basic Health and Welfare

28. Ensure equal access to free and quality health care for all children and in particular the most vulnerable children, including children from ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, street children, asylum seeking children and children without papers;

Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities

29. Guarantee for all children, including the most vulnerable children, in Europe and world wide access to free education without discrimination, with a curricula which ensures the aims of education as set out in article 29 of the UNCRC;
30. Ensure the implementation of the Barcelona Targets to provide child care by 2010 and allowing for access to early childhood care and education;

Special Protection Measures

Violence and Exploitation against Children

31. Ban in law all forms of violence against children, including harmful and degrading treatment, such as corporal punishment, in the home;
32. Develop national strategies to prevent and protect children from all forms of violence, including clear targets and budget allocations, as well as mechanisms at local level where children or others can report cases of violence;

33. Take action, including setting up mandatory action plans in each school, to prevent all forms of violence and humiliating and degrading treatment in schools, including bullying, **and "cyber-bullying"** with the use of technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones;
34. Ensure that the revision of the Council Framework Decision on combating sexual exploitation of children and child pornography includes strong protective measures for victims and preventive measures, as well as training of all officials involved with victims of sexual abuse, as in line with the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse;
35. Ensure that the revised Council Framework Decision on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims (2009) will include strong protective measures for victims and preventive measures, as well as training of all officials involved with victims of trafficking, taking **into account the comprehensive recommendations of the 2009 FRA "Child trafficking in the EU" study**;
36. Ensure a swift adoption of the Council Framework Decision on the exchange of criminal records to ensure that children are protected from criminals crossing EU borders;
37. Ensure that children are not placed into detention, or only as a last resort, and ensure the full implementation, compliance or integration of juvenile justice standard rules to **ensure children's access to justice**;
38. Ensure a rapid implementation of the 6-digit telephone number for child hotlines;
39. Fully implement the Young Workers Directive (1994) and eliminate child labour within the EU Member States and externally ensure clauses to combat child labour, according to ILO Conventions 138 and 182, are included in international trade agreements;
40. Develop child friendly justice systems, including criminal, civil and administrative proceedings, based on the forthcoming Council of Europe guidelines on child friendly justice;

Migration and Asylum seeking/Separated children

41. Ensure that third country national children, travelling alone or accompanied by their families are treated first and foremost as children, benefiting from the full range of rights under the UNCRC, regardless of their legal status;
42. Work towards achieving a comprehensive EU action plan which will improve the protection and assistance afforded to all unaccompanied and separated children of third country origin in Europe, regardless of whether they are asylum seeking, trafficked or economic migrants; such an action plan should support Member States in ensuring durable solutions for each child, be that return to and reintegration in the country of origin, transfer

to another country or integration in the host country, taking the best interest of the child as a primary consideration. The action plan should also look to developing protection and opportunities for children in their countries of origin;

Minority Rights

43. Ensure that the large group of Roma children living across the EU all have equal access to education, health and adequate housing and are included in consultancy processes at decision making;

Recommendations for the EU institutions:

General Measures of Implementation

44. We call upon the European Parliament to set up a Cross-Party Group on **Children's Rights, which should bring together members of parliament** from different countries, different political groups and different committees;
45. We call on the European Commission to adopt and implement, after an extensive consultation process with all the relevant stakeholders, including children, a Strategy on the Rights of the Child accompanied by adequate human and financial resources as well as an Action Plan with clear targets and a monitoring plan for the next five years;
46. We call upon the European Parliament to ensure sufficient financial and human resources for the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights **of the Child and ensure that children's rights are a priority** objective within relevant EU budget lines;
47. We call on the European Commission to ensure that the European Forum on the Rights of the Child becomes an effective tool for stakeholder **involvement in EU actions on children's rights, including a transparent** process for organising the Forum, which it is directly linked to existing EU policies and practices and that the recommendations agreed upon at the Forum are taken into account in EU policy-making and action;
48. We call on the European Commission to ensure sufficient human and **financial resources for the Children's Rights Team in DG JLS;**
49. We call on the European Commission to ensure that systematic training in **children's rights is made available to all relevant officials within all EU** institutions on an ongoing basis;
50. We call on the European Commission to support Member States and candidate and potential candidate countries to develop and implement **Action Plans at the national level including the implementation of children's** rights;
51. We call on the European Parliament and the European Commission to closely collaborate with the Council of Europe, in relation to its Programme

'Building a Europe for and with children', the European Convention on Human Rights and its Social Charter;

52. We call on the European Parliament and the European Commission to develop and strengthen the collaboration with international bodies, such as the UN;
53. We call on the European Parliament and the European Commission to develop and strengthen the collaboration with civil society organisations and coalitions at local, national and regional level;
54. We call upon the European Parliament and the European Commission to promote awareness raising activities on the UNCRC – taking into account the outcomes of the Euro-**barometer Report on Children's Rights** of 2008;
55. We call on the European Commission to extend the mandate of Eurostat to include a wider range of basic data regarding children, ensuring that the data are coherent, comprehensive, disaggregated and take gender and rural/urban issues into account. With regard to data collection , ensure cooperation with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, national statistical offices and international partners; furthermore we call on the EU Fundamental Rights Agency to continue its process of developing and refining child rights indicators for monitoring progress of child rights **implementation within EU's fields of competence;**
56. We call on the European Commission to continue to play an active role in **promoting the implementation of children's rights in countries** that are acceding or candidates to accede to the EU and through its European **neighbourhood policy. Ensure that the implementation of children's rights** are a condition for accession, as part of the Copenhagen human rights accession criteria;
57. We call upon the European Parliament and the European Commission to dedicate **a European Year for Children's Rights, with a related programme** of activities to support it and with the principal aim to raise awareness of **children's rights;**

Definition of the Child

58. We call upon the European Parliament and the European Commission to ensure that the definition of a child as a person below the age of 18 as set out in the UNCRC, is always respected in decision making and actions taken.

General Principles of the UNCRC

59. We call upon the European Parliament to ensure that children who face discrimination on the basis of sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation are protected by the EC Directive on non-discrimination;

60. We call upon the European Parliament to ensure that the best interest of the child is always a paramount consideration when decision are made which affects an individual child or children as a group:
61. We call upon the European Parliament to ensure that no decisions are **taken which can have a negative impact on a child's survival and development, including the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, psychological and social development;**
62. We call upon the European Parliament and the European Commission to ensure meaningful, ethical and safe child participation on EU matters directly or indirectly affecting children, drawing on the growing range of experience with child participation within the Member States and on the experience and knowledge of existing child and youth networks;

Civil Rights and Freedoms

63. We call upon the European Parliament and the European Commission to ensure that all relevant documentation is available in formats that are accessible to children, taking into account the different stages of children's development as well as the specific needs of children with disabilities (e.g. translating material into Braille);

Family Environment and Alternative Care

64. We call on the European Commission *to* ensure that the groups at most risk of poverty and social exclusion, including children belonging to ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, street children, asylum seeking children and migrant children are in particular covered by EU and national policies to combat poverty and social exclusion;

Basic Health and Welfare

65. We call on the European Commission to ensure equal access to free and quality health care for all children and in particular the most vulnerable children, including children from ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, street children, asylum seeking children and children without papers;
66. We call on the European Commission to support Member States in their efforts to protect children against the use of drugs and diseases such as HIV/AIDS;

Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities

67. We call on the European Commission to guarantee for all children, including the most vulnerable children, in Europe and world wide access to free primary education without discrimination, with a curricula which ensures the aims of education as set out in article 29 of the UNCRC;

Special Protection Measures ***Violence against Children***

68. We call on the European Parliament and the European Commission to support actions by different actors to prevent violence against children, and to encourage Member States which have not done so to introduce in law a complete ban against all forms of degrading and humiliating treatment of children, including corporal punishment in the home;

Migration and Asylum seeking/Separated children

69. We call upon the European Parliament and the European Commission to work towards achieving a comprehensive EU action plan which will improve the protection and assistance afforded to all unaccompanied and separated children of third country origin in Europe, regardless of whether they are asylum seeking, trafficked or economic migrants; such an action plan should support Member States in ensuring durable solutions for each child, be that return to and reintegration in the country of origin, transfer to another country or integration in the host country, taking the best interest of the child as a primary consideration. The action plan should also look to developing protection and opportunities for children in their countries of origin;

Minority Rights

70. We call at the European Parliament and the European Commission to ensure that the large group of Roma children living across the EU all have equal access to education, health and adequate housing and are included in consultancy processes at decision making; any EU strategy on the Romani population should take into account the specific needs of children.

Appendix II

Summary of children's views on the most important issues for the EU and its Member States

From the report "You could always begin by listening to us – A consultation with children on the European Commission communication 'Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child'", Save the Children and Plan International, 2007

This report has been used as a basis for the Stockholm Call for Action. Almost all the issues raised by children in the report are included in the Statement.

Children listed **violence against children** in its different manifestations and settings as the single most important issue to address. They mentioned widespread violence in schools, bullying both in and outside school, being hit by their parents and other adults, child abuse, sexual abuse and security concerns. They emphasised the need for adults to listen and act on what children and young people tell them. Many children felt that their concerns were not being taken seriously or were ignored altogether by adults.

Other important issues highlighted include **discrimination, social exclusion and racism**. Children expressed concerns about discrimination on the basis of age, race, religion, nationality, **gender or just "being different"**. They called for educational programmes and responsible reporting in the media. Some called for more efficient measures and legislation to combat discrimination and racism.

The effects **of drugs, alcohol and smoking** were identified as affecting children across Europe. Children proposed stricter legislation, more information and education in schools and positive alternatives as possible ways of addressing the problem.

Poverty was identified as a concern that affected children lives in different ways. Children made a strong link between poverty, social exclusion and exploitation of children. **Child labour, child prostitution and trafficking in children** was a concern to many of the respondents. Children proposed harsher laws, strengthened child protection measures, awareness-raising and social support to stop exploitation of children.

Environmental degradation was listed as a priority area in several questionnaires, coupled with concerns for the future and proposals for strict measures to **protect the environment**.

Children see the need for **more information** to ensure that their rights are better protected, to ensure that they can also help to protect themselves and other children. They feel that other people – including the government – should do more to help young people. Lack of parental support, respect and understanding for children was mentioned as important issues to address.