

Doc. GA 6525/99

THE FOURTEENTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Report

The Legal Framework for Child Protection in the BSEC Member Countries

Rapporteur: Mrs. Lilia Grygorovytch (Ukraine)

Text adopted by the Assembly on 9 December 1999 in Kyiv.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Twelfth Meeting of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee held in Baku on 7-8 April 1999 decided, upon the proposal of the Ukrainian national delegation, to discuss "The Legal Framework for Child Protection in the BSEC Member Countries" as the main subject on the agenda of its Thirteenth Meeting in Volos on 29-30 September 1999.

2. The PABSEC has already approached the subject of child protection within the framework of its discussions of the Report on "The Social Problems of the Transition Period in the PABSEC Member Countries" and Recommendation 14/1996 "On Social Guarantees during the Transition Period in the PABSEC Member Countries" adopted by the PABSEC Seventh Session in Baku on 13 June 1996. Children-related issues have been also considered in the Report on "Cooperation among the PABSEC Member Countries for the Improvement of Education" and Recommendation 10/1995 adopted at the Fifth General Assembly in Moscow in June 1995, as well as in the Report on the "Youth Cooperation in the Black Sea Region" and Recommendation 24/1997 adopted by the Tenth General Assembly in Chisinau in December 1997. These documents have provided a useful guidance in the process of drafting the present paper and the Rapporteur would like to express appreciation to his colleagues who had worked on these subjects for their important contribution.

3. The Rapporteur would like to express acknowledgements to the national delegations of Armenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine that have forwarded valuable information and proposals for this Report and Recommendation 40/1999 on the same subject, as well as to the PABSEC International Secretariat for information received from international organisations and other sources.

II. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC REALITIES

4. Children in the BSEC member countries in transition have found themselves among the most socially vulnerable sections of the population adversely effected by the economic recession, growing poverty and hardships accompanying the transition period. As economic and social crises have engulfed many of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS countries, support for public health and education is dwindling and children are the main victims. According to *The State of the World's Children 1999*, a report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), more than 32,000 pre-schools have closed across the region, 23,000 in Russia alone, and the number of children attending kindergartens has fallen from 61 to 44 per cent as compared with 1990. These declines have been especially dramatic in the countries with traditionally low kindergarten enrolment: in Georgia - from 44 to 12 per cent, in Azerbaijan - from 22 to 14 per cent.

5. In Georgia, education outlays are now one-tenth of 1990 levels. In Bulgaria, they have fallen by three-quarters over the past decade. As incomes in the region have

fallen, costs of schooling have risen, often sharply. Private efforts to fill the gap left by public shortfalls have opened the way to stratification which denies equal education to the poorest and marginalised children.

6. The neglect of children's right to education is often accompanied by declines in basic health and nutrition. In Russia and Ukraine, there have been slight increases in the under-five child mortality rate over the decade.

7. In the Black Sea region, there are thousands of children living under especially difficult circumstances - orphans, street children, refugees and displaced persons, victims of war and natural and man-made disasters, disabled children and juvenile delinquents. Such children deserve special attention, protection and assistance from their families and communities and as part of national efforts and international cooperation. For example, in Ukraine there are 1.1 million children who are under protection in accordance with the Act "On the Status and Social Protection of Citizens Affected as a Result of the Chernobyl Disaster".

8. Below are some basic statistical indicators, concerning the BSEC member countries, released by UNICEF in 1998:

Country	Total Population	Population under 18	Per Capita GNP (US\$)
Albania	3,401,000	1,246,000	670
Armenia	3,638,000	1,213,000	730
Azerbaijan	7,594,000	2,828,000	480
Bulgaria	8,468,000	1,903,000	1,330
Georgia	5,442,000	1,529,000	440
Greece	10,490,000	2,168,000	8,120
Moldova	4,444,000	1,382,000	920
Romania	22,655,000	5,646,000	1,480
Russia	148,126,000	37,115,000	2,240
Turkey	61,797,000	22,986,000	2,780
Ukraine	51,608,000	12,377,000	1,630

9. The demographic realities are characterised by a rapid ageing of population and falling birth rates in many of the BSEC member countries. As a result, the child population in Ukraine, for example, has decreased by 1,297,000 in the past five years. Even though there are a number of contributing factors, declining incomes and growing poverty accompanying the economic and social crisis of the transition period are among obvious causes behind this demographic trend.

III. THE INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD PROTECTION

10. **The Convention on the Rights of the Child**, unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989, best reflects the aspirations of the international community for the well-being of children. This Convention has broken all records as the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history - it has now been ratified by all but two nations of the world (Somalia and the United States). Its uniqueness stems from the fact that it is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights - children's civil and political rights as well as their economic, social and cultural rights - thus giving all rights equal emphasis.

11. In accordance with Article 1 of the Convention, "a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier".

12. The Convention lays down overarching principles of international law concerning the protection of children's rights, in particular:

- non-discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parents' or legal guardians' race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;
- best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies;
- the child's right to life, survival and development;
- the child's right to have opinions and to express them freely in all matters affecting the child;
- the child's right of access to health care
- the child's right to education, including free compulsory primary education;
- the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, moral and social development
- the right to full participation in social, cultural, educational and other endeavours necessary for the child's individual growth and well-being.

13. In addition, the States Parties to the Convention undertake to take all appropriate measures:

- to protect children from all forms of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment,
- to protect children from economic exploitation,
- to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances,
- to protect children from all forms of sex exploitation and sex abuse,
- to combat the illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad.

14. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, established in accordance with the Convention, meets annually in order to examine the progress made by the States Parties in achieving the realisation of the undertaken obligations. The States Parties

have undertaken to submit to the Committee regular reports on the measures they have adopted which give effect to the rights recognised in the Convention and on the progress made in the enjoyment of those rights.

15. The need to extend particular care to the child has been recognised in the universally recognised international legal instruments in the field of human rights, such as the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, as well as in the statutes and relevant instruments of specialised agencies and international organisations concerned with the welfare of children, first of all, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

16. The World Summit for Children which gathered in New York on 30 September 1990 adopted **the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for implementing the Declaration in the 1990s**. The Declaration and the Plan of Action urged all the nations to take political action at the highest level for the sake of children's well-being and expressed the commitment of the world's nations to act together in such areas as enhancing children's health, lowering child and maternal mortality, eradication of hunger and malnutrition, strengthening the role of women and that of the family, providing educational opportunities for all children, and amelioration of the plight of millions of children living under especially difficult circumstances – victims of war, orphans, street children, children of migrant workers, displaced children and victims of natural and man-made disasters, refugee children, the disabled, the socially disadvantaged and the exploited.

17. **The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action** adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993 dedicated a special chapter to the rights of the child reiterating the importance of major national and international efforts, especially those of the United Nations Children's Fund, for promoting respect for the rights of the child to survival, protection, development and participation.

18. **The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption** (29 May 1993) aims to ensure that inter-country adoptions are made in the best interests of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights, and to prevent the abduction, the sale of, or traffic in children (ratified by Romania)

19. **The Minimum Age Convention No. 138 (1973) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)** aims to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment. It set the minimum age at not less than 15 years, and for any type of employment which by its nature can jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons at not less than 18 years. This Convention has been ratified by Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey, and Ukraine.

20. **The Council of Europe** instruments include:

The European Social Charter (of 18 October 1961 - ratified by Greece and Turkey, signed by Romania and Ukraine). Article 7 of the Charter - *The right of children and young persons to protection* - sets at 15 years the minimum age of admission to employment and at 18 years with respect to occupations regarded as dangerous or unhealthy. Article 16 formulates the right of the family to social, legal and economic protection. In Article 17 - *The right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection* – the Parties undertake, to take all appropriate measures

- to ensure that children and young persons have the care, the assistance, the education and the training they need, in particular by providing for the establishment or maintenance of institutions and services sufficient and adequate for this purpose;
- to protect children and young persons against negligence, violence or exploitation;
- to provide protection and special aid from the state for children and young persons deprived of their family's support;
- provide to children and young persons a free primary and secondary education.

21. **The European Convention on the Adoption of Children** (of 24 April 1967 - ratified by Greece and Romania) contains a core of essential provisions on adoption practice which each party undertakes to incorporate in its legislation. Under the Convention's essential provisions, adoption must be granted by a judicial or administrative authority and the adoption must be in the interests of the child.

22. **The European Convention on the Legal Status of Children born out of Wedlock** (of 15 October 1975 – ratified by Greece and Romania) is designed to bring the legal status of children born out of wedlock into line with that of children born in wedlock and thereby to contribute to the harmonisation of the relevant legislation of the Parties.

23. **The European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions concerning Custody of Children and Restoration of Custody of Children** (of 20 May 1980 - ratified by Greece, signed by Moldova and Turkey) protects custody and access rights in international situations and provides for free, prompt, non-bureaucratic assistance from central authorities designated by each Party in discovering the whereabouts and restoring custody of a child improperly removed.

24. **The European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights** (of 25 January 1996 - ratified by Greece, signed by Turkey and Ukraine) provides a number of procedural measures to allow the children to exercise their rights, in particular in family proceedings before judicial authorities. Among the types of family proceedings of special interest for children are those concerning custody, residence, access, questions of parentage, legitimacy, adoption, legal guardianship, administration of property of children, care procedures, removal or restriction of parental responsibilities, protection from cruel or degrading treatment and medical treatment.

25. The Council of the **European Union** has adopted on 24 February 1997 a Common Action against the trade in human beings and the sexual exploitation of children. Before that, the Council of the European Union had adopted the STOP Programme (Common Action of 29 November 1996) against the trade in human

beings and the sexual exploitation of children. These is also the DAPHNE Programme which supports the member states' actions to fight violence against children, adolescents and women.

IV. NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Armenia

26. The National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia adopted the Law on the Rights of the Child on 29 May 1996. In order to further improve the legal framework of child protection, the Ministry of Social Security has drafted and submitted to the government the following documents:

- Guidelines for work with children deprived of parental custody and guardianship
- Draft government decree on the establishment a centre for children deprived of parental custody and guardianship
- Guidelines for the adoption procedure and for drafting the rules of guardianship for children deprived of parental custody and guardianship
- Draft government decree on the approval of the statute of child care and guardianship institutions
- Draft government decree on the establishment of the adoption procedure for children who are nationals of the Republic of Armenia
- Draft procedure for placing into orphanages of children deprived of parental care
- Methodological guidelines on the procedure for the adoption of children resident in child care institutions and who are eligible for adoption
- Draft law on additional guarantees of the social protection of children, both in parental care and without it

Bulgaria

27. The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria proclaims that the raising and upbringing of children before they become of age is the right and responsibility of their parents and they are supported by the State. Mothers enjoy special protection by the State, which provides paid leave before and after childbirth, free obstetric aid, easier working conditions and other social assistance. Children born out of wedlock enjoy equal rights with those born in wedlock. Children left without the care of their kin are under special protection by the State and society.

28. Among the existing legislation relating to the protection of children are: the Labour Code which provides for pregnancy, childbirth and adoption leaves, additional leaves for raising children as well as easier working conditions for employed mothers; the Family Code which ensures protection and strengthening of the family; the Juvenile Delinquency Combat Act that regulates the prevention and combat of juvenile delinquency, as well as the provision for the normal development and upbringing of juvenile delinquents; the Health Insurance Act, Persons and Family Act, Public Education Act, Public Health Act and Social Security Fund Act which provide for children's interests in various spheres of social life.

29. Institutions protecting children include the Committee for Youth, Physical Education and Sports (it develops the government policy concerning children and draws up the national strategy and proposes bills in conformity with the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), Juvenile Delinquency Commissions, Children's Pedagogical centres, Pedagogical Welfare Boarding Houses, Correctional Schools and Boarding Houses, Homes for Temporary Accommodation of Minors and Orphanages.

30. **Upcoming legislative changes** will further strengthen the legal framework of child protection:

- The Child Protection Bill fills in the existing gaps with regard to the forms of protection, the categories of children placed under special protection, the types of measures that can be undertaken in respect of them and the enforcement procedures, as well as the system of government authorities that perform various function in the field of child protection.
- The Family Relief and Children's Allowances Bill provides for the recognition of the right to ensure sufficient resources for meeting the basic needs of families with children, while using guarantees minimum income level and differentiated social payments.
- The Social Stabilisation Bill is aimed at the social stabilisation of the Bulgarian society through recognition of the work of mothers for raising and upbringing of children as a government-regulated labour activity of paramount importance.
- The Maternity Bill is aimed at providing special government protection to mothers. It provides additional incentives for childbirth and raising of children and for mothers with many children

Greece

31. Greece has acceded to all the international and European legal instruments pertaining to child protection. According to Article 28 of the Greek Constitution, "...International conventions as of the time they are sanctioned by statute and become operative according to their respective conditions, shall be an integral part of domestic Greek law and shall prevail over any contrary provision of the law".

32. The Ministry of Health and Social protection is responsible, along with local government agencies, for the protection of children. The non-state initiative, either on a charitable or on a lucrative basis, completes the whole context of children's protection. Nurseries and kindergartens have the legal form of legal entities of public or private law. They are mainly operating under the supervision of the local government agencies. Today, there are 1178 operating state-run kindergartens, 54 state-run nurseries and 1094 private kindergartens.

33. The adoption is ruled by the European Convention on the Adoption of Children and Statute Law 2447/1996. The adoption requires a judiciary decision. According to the Ministry of Justice, there are about 600 adoptions of children every year. The penal legislation covering the abuse of children (physical, psychological or sexual) corresponds to the international standards as set in the international and European instruments. One of the aims of the Greek policy on the matter is to promote the

cooperation with its neighbouring countries, as well as with the other countries of the region, in order to obtain the highest standard of protection for all children.

Moldova

34. The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova stipulates: "**The family constitutes the natural and fundamental element of society and is entitled to State protection**". The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and adopted the Law on Child Rights. The activity in the field of protection of child rights in the Republic of Moldova is based on the provisions of the following acts:

- The Law on Child Rights
- Marriage and Family Code
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Hague Convention on Child Protection and Cooperation in the Field of International Adoption
- Government decisions on:
 - Committee for Adoption
 - Adoption of children by foreign citizens
 - State Programme on Ensuring Child Rights

35. Presently the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family is elaborating the Draft National Project of the implementation of a strategy on the social protection of the family and the child, the Draft Law concerning handicapped children, and the Law on State Allocations for families with many children. The Draft Law on guardianship and other legislative acts are on different stages of elaboration. A National Council as well as District Councils were established in order to create an effective management system of the problems on Child Rights. Inspectors on protection of child rights were appointed in the municipalities with a population of more than 10,000.

36. Presently in the Republic of Moldova there are 15,800 children in a difficult situation, 11,562 of them are orphans or with parents without the right to educate their children. 2000 of them study in special boarding schools. From 1992 the legislation of the Republic of Moldova allows international adoption. In 1993, the legislation in this field was modified according to the provisions of international acts in this domain.

Romania

37. Revising the legal framework of child protection according to the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child represents a priority in developing and implementing a coherent strategy in this field. The reform of the system of protection of the rights of the child, initiated by the Government of Romania in March 1997, is based on the following principles:

- the principle of the best interests of the child;
- the principle of non-discrimination;
- the decentralisation of decision-making and of responsibilities in this field to the level of local public administrations

- favouring family-type alternatives to institutional-type care of children in difficult circumstances.

In view of implementing the strategy for child protection, a Department for Child Protection was created in January 1997 within the government structures.

38. ***Decentralisation.*** The process of transferring the subordination of residential-type institutions (orphanages) from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of National Education to specialised structures at the local level has been completed. Once the transfer process was completed, it has become a priority to restructure these institutions and organise them as placing centres, create an environment as close as possible to the family, diminish the accent on the strictly medical and educational aspects which dominated the previous approach. 70 residential institutions have been identified as needing urgent restructuring, they are now the object of projects with international financing.

39. At the same time, the process of diversification of child protection has been initiated by organising and developing maternal centres, day care centres, centres for parent counselling, day care and recuperation centres for handicapped children, services for supervising and supporting the social reintegration of delinquent children. The newly created services aim at stimulating the capacity of the parents to raise and care for the children in their own families, ensuring at the same time an active participation of civil society.

40. In autumn 1998 , ***“The Project for Reform of the System of Child Protection”*** was initiated with the participation of international organisations. The first component of this project aims increase the role of local communities and to improve the quality of care in residential type institutions by modulating them into family type units. The second component, ***“Street Children Initiative”***, focuses on concrete actions to address the problem of street children and reduce their number through family and social integration/reintegration. The third component will focus on institutional reform, raising public awareness, monitoring and evaluation.

41. The new framework for the system of adoption is based on Law 87/1998 and implemented by the Romanian Committee for Adoptions. The current legal framework places significant accent on the involvement of local authorities in decision-making. It also focuses on harmonising the internal and international adoption procedures, attempting to shorten the waiting period for the adoption of a child, while strictly complying with internal and international provisions.

Turkey

42. Article 41 of the Constitution of Turkey states that the family is the foundation of Turkish society and while stipulating the family security and welfare, provides for mother and child protection measures and, to this end, foresees the establishment of the relevant institutional framework.

43. Turkish Civil Law No. 2828 on Social Services and Child Protection which came into force in 1983 is an important part of the national legal framework for child protection. This law provides for child protection and all respective measures for a

lawyer if it is necessary to obtain a decision on a child's protection at the court. According to the law, it is the mother's and father's responsibility to bring up their children and to take good care of them.

44. If the mother and father fail to fulfil their responsibilities towards their child, then the relevant authorities have the right to take necessary precautions in order to protect the child, and in this case they can limit parental rights. Those parents who cannot fulfil their parental duties or mistreat their children or abandon them, can be deprived of their parental rights. In this case a guardian for the child should be appointed.

45. If physical, psychological or intellectual development or personal security of a child are endangered by:

- a) absence of mother or father or both of them,
 - b) unidentified mother or father or both of them,
 - c) being abandoned by mother or father or both of them,
 - d) carelessness, indecency, beggary, alcoholism or drug addiction of mother or father who expose their child to all kinds of social dangers and bad habits,
- in this case the child gets the status of "a child in need of protection".

46. Decisions on social services, including care, upbringing and vocational training for children in need of protection until the age of 18 should be taken by court. However, if the child needs immediate protection before the court takes a decision, then according to the Law, the relevant local administration of the area where the family resides can take necessary measures under authorisation of the State.

47. The General Administration for Social Services and Child Protection within the Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for due application of the law provisions.

Ukraine

48. The implementations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is ensured by the Constitution of Ukraine (Article 9) which stipulates that current international treaties which have been ratified by the Supreme Rada of Ukraine are an integral part of Ukrainian domestic legislation. A UNICEF-aided survey of the Ukrainian legislation has demonstrated that the provisions of the UN Convention have mostly been integrated into Ukrainian law. According to the Convention, primary education is compulsory. The Ukrainian legislation stipulates that complete secondary education is compulsory and guarantees access and free-of-charge attendance of pre-school, secondary general school, vocational school and higher education in state-owned and communal-owned educational establishments. Citizens belonging to national minorities enjoy the right to learn their mother tongue in educational establishments through their national cultural centres.

49. Thirty acts and about fifty government decrees deal to a greater or lesser degree with standard-setting for children's social protection, their rights and legitimate interests. The legal status of children is defined in the Marriage and Family Code of Ukraine, the Act "On the State Assistance to Families having Children", the Fundamentals of the Legislation on Health Care, etc. A number of acts and decrees

have been adopted to help reduce the social and economic discrimination of the most vulnerable groups of children – orphans, the disabled, those who suffered as a result of the Chernobyl disaster, HIV-infected and AIDS victims, as well as children from low-income families and families with many children.

50. Ukrainian law envisages penal responsibility for actions relating to the illicit transfer of a child abroad or a child's non-return to Ukraine, or aiming at the forced removal of body organs or tissues for transplantation. There is no official information about the number of children who have not returned from trips abroad as well as about causes of non-return, even though such facts exist. At the same time there are no mechanisms and procedures for the deportation of children who have not returned from abroad. By the same token, there is no dependable supervision on the treatment and upbringing of children who have been adopted by foreign nationals.

51. The Act "On the Bodies and Services for Minors' Affairs and Special Establishments for Minors", adopted in 1995, established a legal framework for special bodies and establishments for minors' affairs, which are designed to implement the social protection and the delinquency-prevention amongst those younger than 18 years of age. In practice, the provisions of this law are not being implemented. In 1998, these services have been terminated in a number of regions. The current status, staffing and financing needs of these services are not being met, which makes it difficult to fully implement the social protection of children.

52. The main obstacle to ensuring the social rights of the child in Ukraine is a low level of available resources. There is a gap between legally defined rights and the actually existing possibilities to implement those rights. At the same time, a number of issues need to be defined in legislative terms. Some provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have not been duly reflected in Ukrainian law or lack an implementation mechanism (in particular, the right to express views freely in all matters affecting the child, the right to freedom of expression, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly).

53. The principal government body responsible for child protection is the Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs. The Ministry works to improve the current legislation and to establish the relevant legal framework for child protection. It had drafted bills "On Childhood Protection", "On Amendments and Addenda to the Acts "On the Bodies and Services for Minors' Affairs and Special Establishments for Minors" and "On the State Assistance to Families having Children" which are now reviewed by the Supreme Rada of Ukraine.

V. CONCLUSIONS

54. Today's children are the citizens of tomorrow's world, therefore, their protection and development is the prerequisite for the future development of the BSEC member countries. Progress for children should be a key goal of overall national development. Empowerment of the younger generation with knowledge and resources to meet their basic human needs and to grow to their full potential should be a primary goal of national development.

55. As one of the most vulnerable groups of the population during the transition period which is underway in most of the Black Sea countries, children have a particular stake in sustained economic growth and alleviation of poverty, without which their well-being cannot be secured. Every possible effort should be made to ensure that programmes benefiting children, women and other vulnerable groups are protected in times of structural adjustments and economic reform.

56. Women play a critical role in the well-being of children. Therefore, the enhancement of the status of women and their equal access to education, training and other services constitute a valuable contribution to social and economic development. At the same time, the family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children. For the full and harmonious development of their personality, children should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of love and understanding. Accordingly, all institutions of society should respect and support the efforts of parents and other care-givers to nurture and care for children in a family environment.

57. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by practically all the countries of the world, contains a comprehensive set of international legal norms for the protection and well-being of children. The BSEC member countries, which are all without exception parties to the Convention, should make every possible effort to promote its implementation and monitoring.

58. At the same time the member countries should endeavour to accede to other international instrument in the field of child protection, such as ILO conventions on prohibiting child labour, the Hague Convention in respect of inter-country adoption, etc.

59. The Council of Europe conventions concerning the status of children, their rights and child-protection issues form an important component of international law relevant for all the BSEC countries most of which are at the same time member states of the Council of Europe. The Black Sea countries should do their best to ratify those conventions and to incorporate the provisions of those conventions in their national legislation.

60. The BSEC member countries should adopt - at national and local level - a proactive and comprehensive childhood policy which seeks full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and which will consider the best interests of the child as a guiding principle.

61. The interests and needs of children should be always duly considered and taken into account through such practices as the “child impact statement” which determine the probable impact on children of any proposed legislative, regulatory or other measures.

62. Appropriate steps should be taken to inform children and their parents of their rights by widely publicising and disseminating the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as to provide training in children’s rights for all professionals who come

into contact with children, including teachers, social workers, administrative and judicial authorities, etc.

63. Appropriate strategies should be designed for partnership between governments (at national and local level), non-government organisations and the private sector in matters concerning child protection.