

**Intervention of Mrs. Ileana Savu, Secretary of State of the National  
Authority for the Protection of Child's Rights**

**Geneva, 5 June 2009**

Honourable Mrs. President,

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Dear Observers,

It is a great honour for me to present you the efforts made by Romania, and the results obtained in the process of implementing the UN Convention on the rights of the child. My mandate as head of the National Authority for the Protection of Child's Rights started in February 2009.

At that time, following the recent elections and the installation of a new Government, I took over the responsibility of coordinating a system of child's rights protection that made considerable progress in the last years, due to the commitment and sustained efforts made by all the previous Governments.

The progress achieved was, to an important extent, guided by the Recommendations made by the UN Committee on the rights of the child, following our previous reports.

I am very determined, but also challenged, as regards the measures that are still to be taken in order to make a better life for the children of Romania, and I am committed to make all the efforts that are needed for putting them into practice.

Starting with 2005, when the new legislative package in the field of the protection and promotion of child's rights entered into force, Romania is acting more concerted for creating the necessary conditions for the observance of the children's rights.

This legal framework has created the premises of the inter-institutional collaboration, under the coordination of the National Authority for the Protection of Child's Rights.

Although it has been stated that its situation within the Government is not the most adequate for the accomplishment of its mandate, the National Authority has managed, through the created mechanisms (the Coordination Council), the instruments used (projects financed by the state budget and by external sources), and its human resources, to achieve most of the established objectives.

The Action Plan for the implementation of the new legislative package and, starting with 2008, the National Strategy in the field of the protection and promotion of child's rights 2008-2013, are the programmatic documents which are guiding the interventions of the institutions with responsibilities in this field.

Significant progress has been made in what concerns the professionals', parents' and children's getting to know the provisions of the new legislation, the securing of a better protection against child abuse, neglect and exploitation and the improvement of the quality of the services provided for children at risk and for children for whom protection measures have been established.

There is a sound political will, and measures have already been initiated, for undertaking an ample decentralisation process and for developing and diversifying the child day care services.

Particular attention is currently given, in the process of decentralisation, to supporting the local authorities to fulfil their responsibilities in the field of child's rights, and to adequately prepare the transfer of attributions from the central to the local level in the fields of education and health. The Government already approved the decentralisation strategy for the health system.

The continuation of the decentralisation in the field of child protection raised some problems regarding the financial and human resources. Since 2005, efforts have been made to strengthen the capacity of the local social services, training their staff and creating awareness among the local decision-makers on what concerns the children's issues.

The percentage of children placed in family-type alternatives where they benefit of good quality living conditions and of a holistic approach, has increased compared to that of the children placed in institutions. Currently,

children are placed mainly as a consequence of the abuse, neglect, or exploitation, and not as in the past, when poverty and/or disability were the main causes of institutionalisation.

In view of preventing the separation of children from their parents, the efforts to provide, for the children living in poor families and for the children with disabilities, the benefits and the services to which they are entitled, have intensified.

The evaluation of the maternal assistance system, performed in 2006, has determined us to think over the actual family type services, in view of finding a solution focusing more on the child's relatives and community network, and keeping the maternal assistance only as a solution for children with special care needs.

The support given to parents by the professionals need to be improved. Their punitive attitudes against parents are still persisting, while the need of developing and diversifying the services offered to them, including parental education programmes, is increasing.

Measures have been initiated to stimulate the national adoption by completing the legislation in order to shorten the duration of the procedures.

Violence against children has already been included on the Government agenda in the form of an integrator concept of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking, and a National Action Plan for preventing and

combating the violence against children, for 2009-2013, will be approved by a Government decision in the coming period.

As regards children's health, the quality of the medical services has increased, after several measures taken that proved their sustainability: the implementation of the National Health Programme for Women and Children, the development of the community medical assistance (represented by the community nurses and Roma health mediators), the use of standardised documents for supervising the pregnant women (the "pregnant woman booklet"), by setting up social services in maternity wards, implementation of the "health education" discipline in schools, promoting the breastfeeding and, with UNICEF's support, transforming some maternity wards into "baby friendly" hospital sections.

The mental health is an actual issue that need to be further approached by the authorities. The Ministry of Health, through the National Centre for Mental Health, will finalise in the next period a national strategy referring to the children's mental health, highlighting the need of early interventions in the treatment of the children with mental health problems.

The benefits granted for children with disabilities living in their own families and to their families have not always been accompanied by the necessary services that would contribute to increasing their effectiveness. In order to reduce prejudices that they have to face together with their parents, the National Authority for the Protection of Child's Rights has initiated and has been recently awarded an ample project aimed at supporting the social integration of the children with disabilities.

The education continues to be a national priority, higher percentages of the Gross Domestic Product had been granted for this field through the state budget in the last years, mainly for investments in infrastructure. The latest measures in this field were meant to increase the access to education of the children living in disadvantaged communities, to involve parents and children in the process of decision making in what concerns the school life and the education system, and to improve the pre-school infrastructure.

The concern of the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation related to early education is complemented by that of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection regarding the provision of child day-care services for children whose parents are working, studying or are looking for a job. By the public policy adopted in 2008, which is reuniting these 2 preoccupations, the Government intends to achieve the Barcelona targets by the end of 2013. The child day care services will be developed by the local public authorities according to the needs identified in their communities, including the leisure and recreational needs.

An increased attention is paid by the local authorities to the creation or refurbishment of sport grounds and halls, children's clubs or camps etc. can already be noticed. Progress has been made especially in what concerns the creation and improvement of the parks and play grounds for children under 10.

Many steps have been made in order to foster the correct application of the UN Convention on the rights of the child in the field of justice: specialised

panels of judges have been established, judges and prosecutors involved in causes with children have received training in child's rights, and cooperation relations have been established with the child protection services.

Many projects have been implemented starting with 2005 having as objective to train the professionals entering into contact with children in their daily activities (social workers, priests, teachers, medical staff, policemen, judges and prosecutors).

The Government of Romania is committed to continue the reforms started in the field of child protection and child rights protection, paying it a special attention during this difficult period of the economic crisis that affects the entire world.

Given the specificity of the period we are going through, special attention has to be paid to preventing and combating child's poverty. A recent study of UNICEF Romania and World Bank predicts that the number of poor children will increase this year with 38% compared to 2008.

The enforcement of the priority measures in the fields of education, health, child's rights, and the protection of children and families, will have to take into consideration these realities, by increasing the support for children and families who are facing difficult situations.

We will continue to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the important financial allocations for Romania under the European Union

funds, and submit new projects in the field of education, health, social inclusion, decentralisation, in order to support the reforms implementation.

To conclude, I want to mention that we consider the dialogue with the Committee to be a constructive exercise, which is extremely useful in the process of shaping the national policies and the strategies for their implementation.

I thank you for the attention paid to this short presentation regarding the progress made by Romania in the field of child's rights protection and promotion and I assure you of the entire availability of the members of our Delegation to answer to your questions.