



REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

54th Session of the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child

ADDRESS

BY H.E. Xhelal Bajrami
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Geneva, 27 May 2010

Esteemed President of the Committee,
Distinguished Members of the Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be the head of the Macedonian Delegation at the 54th session of the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child, for the consideration of the Second Periodical Report of the Republic of Macedonia presenting the level of fulfillment of obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the same time, we also submit our Initial Reports presenting the fulfilled obligations for the implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention. We attach special importance in this regard considering that our reports are considered in a period immediately after the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of one of the universally accepted human rights conventions, i.e. the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Madam Chairperson,

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia attaches the highest of priorities to fulfilling its obligations related to the development and advancement of human rights and freedoms. There have been a great number of activities related to all aspects of human rights, as well as for the improvement of the conditions in our country in the field on the rights of the child.

10 years have passed since the consideration of the Initial Report of the Republic of Macedonia, and 2 years from the submission of the Second Periodical Report. In the period thus far, important steps have been undertaken and activities have been implemented in the field on the rights of the child. This is a long period which illustrates the scope of the work of the extensive work your Committee undertaking. In this context, we have joined the countries that support the activities of the Committee in order to cope with the burden of large number of reports the consideration of which is pending. In addition, I would like to inform you that the Republic of Macedonia also supports the initiative for adoption of an additional protocol to the Convention related to the right of appeal.

Madam Chairperson,

I would like briefly elaborate upon the activities that the Republic of Macedonia has undertaken in the previous 2-year period, and to give a general overview of our submitted reports. In general terms, in the preparation of the reports, we have been guided by the Committee conclusions and recommendations, but we have also followed activities undertaken at the national level. In the preparation of the report, there have been extensive inter-ministerial consultations, and we have also closely cooperated with the UNICEF office in the country, with which we otherwise cooperate in all other relevant areas.

Madam Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the fact that this is mentioned in the Core document on our country, I would like to underline that the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia guarantees special care and protection of children and the family.

After the Republic of Macedonia acceded and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993, as well as the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2003 and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts in 2004, the provisions of these legally binding documents have been incorporated in the domestic legislation. The Macedonian legislation regulating the rights of the child has been relevantly amended and adjusted following the principles of these documents.

Special protection of children in the Republic of Macedonia is regulated in a number of laws, such as: the Law on the Family, the Law on the Protection of Children, the Law on Social Protection, the Criminal Code, the Law on Primary Education, the Law on Secondary Education, as well the Law on Juvenile Justice.

The Law on the Family sets forth protection of children against neglect, abuse and violence, envisaging measures for protection and supervision of the exercise of parental rights, and introducing provisions related to the treatment of the domestic violence.

The amendments to the Law on the Family of 2008 were focused on the protection of the rights of children – victims of trafficking in human beings; introducing a new chapter “Custody of juvenile persons - victims of trafficking in human beings” the provisions of which precisely define the measures that need to be undertaken by the relevant institutions for the protection of the interests of this category of children. In addition, in 2010 there were amendments and supplements to the Law on the Family in relation to adoption of children, setting forth a new manner of selection of adoptive parents, i.e. envisaging selection of adoptive parents by electronic way.

The Law on the Protection of Children introduces provisions which envisage protection of the children against any form of discrimination, as well as prohibition of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, violent taking away, selling or trafficking in children, physical or psychological violence or inhuman treatment, exploitation and commercial abuse; This Law also sets forth sanctions for all acts that violate the rights of children. Upon the 2009 amendments and supplements of the Law on the Protection of Children a new right to parental supplementary benefit was introduced, aimed at the demographic development in the Republic of Macedonia.

In July 2009 a new Law on Social Protection was adopted. It ensures further development of non-institutional protection of children by introducing a new right to independent living with support and by establishing small group residences, improving the professional work by introducing an obligation for drafting an individual plan for work with the beneficiary, strengthening human resources at social protection institutions, by introducing continuous training of professional workers and issuing work licenses, ensuring integration of children and the youth in the community upon leaving the institutions and foster families by providing a significant one-off pecuniary assistance, as well as assistance in solving their housing issue.

Dear Madam Chairperson,

Under the Law on Primary and Secondary Education, the following measures have been implemented at the institutional level:

Trainings have been conducted in non-violence and security in schools. The role of the State Educational Inspectorate has been strengthened in monitoring the enrolment process, evaluation of schools, especially in terms of integral evaluation in which one of the indicators of quality of education is regular attendance of tuition and dropping out of school. The EMIS – systematic electronic monitoring of all developments in this area – has been introduced. Trainings have been conducted for teachers for the purpose of introducing contemporary tuition methods according to the individual needs of the pupils. Trainings have been conducted for school special associates in providing support to the vulnerable categories of pupils. Self-evaluation of schools is conducted as one of the measures for assessing the situation at schools and the development plan as an instrument for overcoming the potential shortcomings. A program for conditional cash transfers has been adopted as a direct financial support to pupils whose parents are welfare beneficiaries. Free transport is provided to pupils in primary education who live more than 2 km from the school, i.e. free transport for pupils in secondary education who live more than 2.5 km from the school and who study in another region. Free accommodation and free food is provided to pupils who go to school in a different settlement than their place of residence.

In respect of Roma children, the Ministry of Education and Science has carried out several activities. The campaign for their inclusion in the educational process is continuously supported. A Guidebook on Non-discrimination in the educational process has been prepared in order to ensure equal conditions and opportunities for quality education for all children regardless of their religious, national or any other affiliation.

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Law on Juvenile Justice, adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia on 4 July 2007, represents a reform of the juvenile legislation of the Republic of Macedonia as it encompasses the international juvenile justice standards. The Law is guided by the principle of protection of the minor and the minor's rights, socialization and assistance in the treatment of the minor, restorative justice and prevention of juvenile delinquency.

Aiming at creating the necessary pre-conditions for effective application of the Law, in 2008 the Government adopted the **2008-2009 Action Plan for Implementation of the Law for Juvenile Justice**. Under the activities envisaged by the Plan, **secondary legislation has been adopted, basic and specialized trainings have been conducted for judges, public prosecutors and police officers who work in the field of juvenile justice and its prevention and are employed at social work centers and lawyers.**

Publications, analyses and teaching aids have been prepared for effective application of the Law. On 16 November 2009, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a Decision on the Selection of 15 members of the **State Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency**.

In respect of child protection, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia is especially focused on undertaking coordinated, planned and efficient measures for prevention and prosecution of sexual abuse of children and pedophilia, protection of and assistance for street children and their families, children with developmental disabilities, children from families with many children, children from poor and socially excluded families, and children without parents and parental care.

In November 2008, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia adopted the 2009-2012 Action Plan for Prevention and Prosecution of Sexual Abuse of Children and Pedophilia. This document envisages a set of inter-ministerial and coordinated for prevention, protection and treatment of child sexual abuse and pedophilia in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as inclusion of all relevant institutions and non-governmental organizations on the central and local levels. For the purpose of efficient and coordinated implementation of the Action Plan, a National Coordinative Body has been formed. It is composed of representatives of all relevant ministries and also involves non-governmental organizations.

Under the aforesaid Action Plan, the following activities have been undertaken: research and analysis of the situation with child sexual abuse and pedophilia in the Republic of Macedonia, which is conducted with financial support from the UNICEF office in the country; a national SOS phone line has been established for reporting cases of child sexual abuse and pedophilia that functions and is managed by a non-governmental organization – the First Children's Embassy in the World "Medjashi"; training have been conducted for part of the employees at the social work centers in identifying victims of child sexual abuse and pedophilia, as well as trainings for journalists in proper informing about cases of child sexual abuse and pedophilia. In addition, in 2009 activities were taken for adopting the Journalists' Code for informing about cases of child sexual abuse and pedophilia. This Code was proposed by the journalists

at the trainings organized in June/July 2009 by the First Children's Embassy in the World "Megjashi", with financial support from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.

Dear Madam Chairperson,

The subsequent activity envisages drafting a Protocol for Acting upon Reported Cases of Child Sexual Abuse and Pedophilia, which will include all competent ministries, institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The 2009-2011 Prevention Strategy was adopted in September 2008. It is directly related to the police reform strategy and stimulates the process of transformation from a traditional police model of acting to a compatible model of police organization in line with European standards.

Posts have been defined and police officers (inspectors) have been appointed to work in the area of juvenile delinquency, domestic violence, trafficking in children, child sexual abuse, pedophilia and child internet pornography, as well as posts for prevention of juvenile delinquency and socio-pathological phenomena.

Facilities have been equipped for work with victims of child sexual abuse. At the same time, several special facilities are being converted and equipped for work with child perpetrators and victims of crimes.

Dear Madam Chairperson,

Aiming at establishing a comprehensive and efficient system for protection from and prevention of domestic violence in the Republic of Macedonia, in April 2008 the Government adopted the 2008-2011 National Strategy for Protection from Domestic Violence. This document aims to reduce domestic violence and improve the quality of protection with systematic measures in the fields of prevention, intervention, education, following and inter-ministerial coordination. Another goal of the Strategy is effective and efficient acting for dealing with domestic violence by adopting a unified position and approach. For purposes of monitoring its implementation, a National Coordinative Body has been formed. It is comprised of representatives of all relevant ministries and non-governmental organizations.

Regarding the protection of street children, a Multidisciplinary Protocol for Treating Street Children in the Republic of Macedonia has been adopted, aiming at protection and prevention of the phenomenon of street children. The protocol creates a space for effective operational procedure that will contribute to a faster, timely, proper and efficient reaction and coordination in identifying and referring such children in relevant institutions, by respecting the principle of networked inter-institutional cooperation at the state/governmental level and by including the non-governmental sector.

Furthermore, aiming at recovering and reintegration of street children the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy has opened two daily centers for street children in Skopje. These two daily centers accommodate approximately 500

children per year. A further three daily centers for street children are planned to be opened in 2010.

In addition, the UNICEF Office in Skopje has provided expert assistance for drafting a training program for the professional workers who work with street children. In the forthcoming period joint activities are planned to be conducted with Roma NGOs that work in this field.

Dear Madam Chairperson,

Several strategic documents are being prepared for families with more children and for families hit by poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia, are preparing many strategic documents.

The National Strategy on Demography, which envisages a number of measures for protection of and assistance to the families and improvement of parental care, by providing assistance from the state, has been adopted.

A National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion has been adopted. It proposes measures, activities and solutions that lead to social inclusion and poverty reduction in defined timeframes, upon systemic grounds that exist in the specific fields. This strategy is focused on the citizen, the family and group of citizens, which also will be reflected in relation with the protection of the children.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is drafting a National Strategy for Development of Social Protection, which will define the objectives, priorities and directions of the development of social protection for the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, with medium and short-term measures of active social policy.

Dear Madam Chairperson,

As regards the protection of children with developmental disabilities, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy has opened 22 daily centers, which are visited by 348 children with mental disabilities, while one daily center for children with autism in Skopje and a further three daily centers for children with mental disabilities are planned to be opened.

In addition, for the purpose of ensuring supportive environment for better social integration and identification of obstacles to access to health services for children with special needs and children with disabilities, the Ministry of Health has developed an Action Plan for Promotion of Health at Children with Disabilities. The Action Plan primarily focuses on:

- a. equal and safe access to health services;
- b. enhancing the capacities of health professionals for better accommodating the health needs of children with disabilities and their families; and
- c. developing an effective referral system in line of a holistic and integrative approach to disabilities.

Dear Madam Chairperson,

In regard to the infant mortality rate, I would like to share some data that are relevant from the aspect of establishing the real situation.

1. Macedonia has experienced a trend of decreasing of the infant mortality rates, from 22.7 per 1000 live births in 1995 to 13.2 in 2004 and 9.7 per 1000 live births in 2008. What is also encouraging is the reduction of the mortality rate by 5, from 14.8 in 2004 to 10.9 per 1000 live births in 2008.
2. At the end of 2006, in response to the most recent data on perinatal mortality, the Ministry of Health (MoH) established a National Perinatal Committee (NPC) with a mandate to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the situation in perinatal care and to draft a long-term plan for interventions aimed to improve health in this sector.
3. As part of the 2008 Annual Work Plan with the Ministry of Health, the UNICEF office in the country provided technical assistance to the National Prenatal Committee in order to strengthen its technical capacities and accelerate the completion of the tasks delegated by the Ministry of Health.
4. In 2009 the National Perinatal Committee, with the technical assistance of the UNICEF office in Skopje, developed the first draft Strategy for Safe Motherhood. The Strategy concerns several issues, including: access to safe motherhood services, quality of perinatal care, strengthening the capacities of health care institutions in providing safe motherhood services, and improving the monitoring and evaluation processes.
5. In order to improve the national response regarding sexual and reproductive rights of the entire population, the Ministry of Health and the Public Health Institute, with the technical assistance of the UNFPA, has been working on developing a National Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health, with several priority actions, such as:
 - a. improving access to information about sexual and reproductive health, especially for population at risk, including adults;
 - b. expanding the approach with sexual and reproductive health services through integration of services in primary health care;
 - c. establishing community based counseling services for sexual and reproductive health, focused on adults; and
 - d. improving health care data management and following and assessing the status of reproductive health of the population.

Dear Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Allow me to reiterate my satisfaction with the opportunity to head the Macedonian delegation and with the opportunity to acquaint you with the basic achievements related to the Second Periodical Report of the Republic of Macedonia in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as in respect of the accomplishments in the implementation of the Initial Reports of the Optional Protocols to the Convention.

To conclude, I would like to thank you for your attention and to express my readiness to supplement and elaborate on the information related to the situation

in this area in the Republic of Macedonia through an open dialogue between the members of the delegation that I lead and the distinguished members of the Committee.

Thank you.