

**STATEMENT BY THE CROATIAN DELEGATION  
TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD  
AT THE CONSIDERATION OF THE  
2nd PERIODIC REPORT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

presented by the Head of Delegation of the Republic of Croatia,  
Mr. Doc. Nino Žganec, Ph. D., State Secretary  
in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

Check against delivery

Geneva, 20 September 2004.

*Mr Chairperson,  
Distinguished Members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN  
representatives, NGOs, Ladies and Gentlemen*

It is an honour for me, to address the **Committee on the Rights of the Child** on behalf of the delegation of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. After the last presentation of its Initial report of 1996, the Government took seriously Committee's recommendations and today would like to present their implementation as well as progress in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child contained in the **Croatian Second Periodic Report** and written answers submitted to the Committee.

And after this general remarks, allow me to briefly introduce the members of Delegation which are ready to be on your disposal for discussion:

**Doc. Nino Žganec**, Ph. D. State Secretary, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare  
– Head of Delegation

**Nevio Šetić**, Ph. D., State Secretary, Ministry of Science, Education and Sport

**Ljubica Matijević Vrsaljko**, Ombudsperson for children

**Dubravka Hrabar**, Ph. D., Family Law Department, Faculty of Law, Zagreb

**Božica Cvjetko**, State Attorney Deputy

**Mila Jelavić**, Chief in Social Welfare Administration, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

**Marija Pećanac**, Administrative Counselor in Legal Issues Administration, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

**Romana Kuzmanić Oluić**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Jadranka Huljev**, Senior Administrative Counselor, Ministry of Science, Education and Sport

**Tijana Čupić**, interpreter

**Branka Meštrović**, interpreter

*Mr Chairperson,*

The Second Periodic Report in 2002 covers period from last report until the end of 2001 and written answers until today. From 1996 we have changed the legislative framework - the various amendments to the existing laws and the new laws improved the legal conditions of the rights of child. Cooperation with NGOs has been strengthened, the entirely new governmental or independent institutions were established, and various strategies or action plans were adopted. The Republic of Croatia has ratified several key international instruments in the area of the children's protection, such are those in the **area of trans-national organised crime, biology or biomedicine.**

*Mr Chairperson,*

Croatia has undertaken a comprehensive national reform in the field of children's rights. In 2003 the **Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Act and the Family Act** were amended. Croatia has adopted new laws such as the **Law on the Protection Against Domestic Violence, the Law on the Ombudsperson for Children and the Act on the Reward for the Promotion of the Rights of the Child.** The first **Ombudsperson** was appointed by the Croatian Parliament, and she is today member of our delegation.

*Mr Chairperson,*

Better protection of children, improved conditions for all children as well as promotion of non-discrimination and equal chances and the strategy for implementation of the conventional principle of the "*best interest of child*" have been always high on agenda of the Croatian government. In line with the UN proclaimed *credo: "World fit for children"* and all its principles, the Government is fully committed to review all achievement, analyse all failures and fulfil the still existing gaps, as well as to put together all actors in the field of children's protection, within the country and in co-operation with international organisations and institutions. For the first time in Croatia, within the reorganisation of the state administration, we started with the project of very broad ministry, the **Ministry for Family** with an idea to collect all sectors in society involved in a children care at one place.

*Mr Chairperson,*

before we start today (I hope at least) our fruitful and interesting discussion and interactive dialog concerning the implementation of the Convention and protection of children's rights in Croatia, I would like to give you few booklets, manuals, as well as other material which have been produced in the Republic of Croatia in this field. Allow me to draw your attention, also, to the Croatian answers to the **Mr. Pinhiero Questionnaire** (UN Secretary - General's Study on Violence against Children). We have just forwarded it to the Mr. Pinhiero and would like to share it also with the Committee that initiated whole study on violence against children. Croatian's answers in this study could give you a very recent overview on the issue of children protection and help you to have the

complete picture of the effort of Croatia in this particular field of combating violence against children.

*Mr Chairperson,*

I am in particularly happy to present this report, under new circumstances in Croatia as a country which has recently obtained the candidate status by the European Council and which is steadily progressing on the path to **full membership of the European Union**. Allow me to say that we are deeply convinced that progress in the field of human rights, in particular in the protection of children's rights, has been an important part in the process of new pro-European policy of the Republic of Croatia. As stated in EU conclusions: "Croatia is a functioning democracy, with stable institutions guaranteeing the rule of law, respecting the limits of their competences and co-operating with each other. There are no major problems in regard to the assurance of the rule of law and the respect for fundamental rights". I hope that these words speak enough in favour of the current position of the Republic of Croatia, which made a significant step further in democracy since our last 1996 report.

*Mr Chairperson,*

The Republic of Croatia is a party to all the major international treaties on global and regional levels (without reserves concerning their texts) and has incorporated their relevant standards in domestic legislation. Croatia is meeting its regularly commitments concerning the periodic reports and recommendations on it. Moreover, Croatia would like to play an active and transparent role in international co-operation in the field of human rights. Accordingly, I would like to inform you that Croatia clearly extended an open invitation to the **thematic mechanism of the Human Right Commission** to visit its institutions, what was accepted by the international community as an act of good will. In addition to that, the **Human Right Commissioner of Council of Europe** visited us in June, and in Croatia prepares for the visit of **European Commission for Racism**. So we are expecting both reports soon, and you can be sure that, as well as with your recommendations, we are going to accept and implement them in order to develop the current standards in the field of children's rights.

I would also like to mention **that Convention on the Rights of the Child** and the Geneva Conventions were the first international instruments that the Croatia as a new independent country became a state party to. It was, for sure, provoked by the war aggression in Croatia when the adequate protection of the rights of the child was one of the most important issues.

The international law plays an important role in Croatia. Croatia, through its constitutional regulation established a transparent system concerning the implementation of international law. Pursuant **to article 140 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia**, international treaties which have been concluded in compliance with the Constitution and published and are currently in force, represent a part of the international legal order and above the national legislation in the hierarchy of legal sources. As such, international treaties can apply directly.

*Mr Chairperson,*

Allow me to inform you briefly about the recent development in this field in Croatia:

- Although Republic of Croatia adopted the National Action Programme for Children already in 1998, its implementation required further revision. Therefore, for the purpose of specifying measures of the National Programme in 2003, priority actions for children's welfare 2003-2005 were adopted. The intention of these measures is an attempt to improve conditions for development of the most vulnerable groups of children, such as neglected and abused children, children with disabilities or endangered by consequences of war.
- In October 2002, Croatia produced documents which significantly promote rights and interests of children, such as: National Family Policy, National Strategy of Single Policy for Disabled Persons, National Action Programme for Youth, etc. I would like particularly to point out document set out in February 2004, named The Programme of Activities for Prevention of Violence among Children and Youth. We expect first results of implementation of this document quite soon. The set out of this document was motivated by a research which showed that in Croatia there were 20% of abused children, which means that we are significantly present in the European estimations of currently 15% of abused children. The aim of the Programme is to establish systematic solutions for prevention and elimination of problems in this area. The other documents which were recently produced, such as National Programme for Prevention of Trafficking and National Program against Poverty and Social Exclusion, relate to the protection of children in the domain of prevention of poverty and children trafficking.
- I would also like to inform you that the Council for Children, as an inter-department body, has been operating in Croatia from 1998. It was established for the purpose of setting out, supervising and promoting the implementation of the National Programme for Children (now acting in the third assembly) and exactly last week a new agenda of its activities was adopted (revision, that is supplementation of already mentioned Priority Activities for Children, observation of the date of ratification of the Convention – 20<sup>th</sup> of November, allocation of resources to NGOs for the implementation of the programme in the field of protection of children and their rights, establishment of the network of family centres, etc.).
- By establishing **the Office of Ombudsperson for Children**, which joined to already existing framework of system of institutions for protection of children in 2003 with the task of monitoring and promoting rights of the children, Republic of Croatia continues to affirm in international framework as an advocator of rights in this area.

- Also in December 2002, the **Community Centre for Child Victims of Abuse** was opened in Zagreb. The basic objective of the Centre is to provide psychological, social, psychiatric, special-education and pediatric assistance to children and their families in order to help them cope better with the consequences of traumatic experiences. The assistance includes detailed individual study and diagnostics by a multidisciplinary team as well as planning and carrying out adequate psychological, psychiatric and/or special-education therapy.
- The Republic of Croatia co-operates also with its international partners, and strongly supports **UNICEF** as well as the other UN agencies in their efforts to promote and protect the rights of the child. UNICEF has launched a major campaign on "**Safe and Enabling Schools**" in Croatia. In conjunction with the media this campaign managed to raise public awareness and sensitivity to issues such as violence in schools, particularly the bullying phenomena. All actors – parents, teachers, as well as children – must identify and recognize the problem, and then work together to eliminate its causes. The campaign has already been introduced into over 140 schools in Croatia, and over 40 national experts are also directly involved. The implementation of this programme will last over the entire 2004, when we expect final results.

*Mr Chairperson and distinguished members of the Committee*

Allow me now to conclude my introductory. The Republic of Croatia as a State Party to the CRC fully supports the role of the Committee on the Rights of the Child as the body responsible for monitoring the Convention's implementation. On behalf of my delegation I would like to thank you for your attention, and I am calling you on discussion.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.