Statement on Promotion and Protection of the rights of Children (Item 65)

by Tamta Kupradze, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the UN
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Mr. Chair,

My delegation aligns itself with the EU statement on the Rights of the Child.

It is my privilege to engage in this comprehensive discussion on the protection and promotion of the rights of children and join the international community in its efforts to place children's issues high in the international agenda, as well as addressing this important topic at the level of domestic legislations.

Georgia is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as to the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and to the Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement in Armed Conflicts. Therefore, the protection of the rights of children is of utmost priority for the country. Georgia is actively involved in the child care system reform and spares no efforts to ensure full protection of the rights of the child, including right to education and healthcare.

Georgia actively takes part in harmonization of domestic legislation in line with the Convention on the rights of the Child/ Child Care reforming Process. With this aim, in April 2012, the Government adopted National Action Plan 2012-2015 for Child Welfare and Protection (hereinafter – NAP) and established Inter-agency Coordinating Council for the implementation of NAP. It fully reflects the priorities of the state in reforming child welfare system and in enforcing the commitments undertaken under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It includes the fundamental changes of the child care system in different directions, such as, optimization of institutions, rehabilitation of the victims of violence, provision of the adequate services for homeless children and so forth. In this regard, the assistance provided by UNICEF has been immensely valuable.
Furthermore, several legislative changes have been made regarding the Adoption and Foster upbringing with the aim to facilitate flexible adoption system to provide family environment for children and to simplify the Adoption and Foster upbringing procedures.

In July 2012, the Parliament of Georgia criminalized domestic violence. According to the amendments, domestic violence, committed against juveniles or against family members of a juvenile in his/her presence is an aggravating circumstance.

To support public health, number of programs have been elaborated to provide additional coverage for the healthcare needs of children and to safeguard public health. In addition, special government programs for children were enacted in order to improve children’s health and affordability and accessibility to high quality care.

The establishment of the crisis centers is considered by the government as a crucial necessity for addressing the problem of homeless, i.e. street children. The activity of such crisis centers is oriented towards rehabilitation and establishment of educational care and professional programs in accordance with the child interests. Such institutions provide homeless children with rehabilitation services that ensure their full reintegration into society.

Mr. Chair,

While Georgia makes a gradual progress in advancing and protecting children’s rights, it is with great regret that we have to bring to the attention of the international community the serious obstacles that the government encounters in this direction in the occupied regions of Georgia. Ethnically-targeted violence inhibits the development of the considerable part of young generation in the shadow of instability and illegal occupation. Humanitarian and human rights situation has particularly deteriorated due to the intensification of the installation of barbwire fences along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali region. The freedom of movement, right to education and other civil, social, economic and cultural rights, ensured by fundamental principles of international law, are blatantly violated on a daily basis.

Children in the occupied regions of Georgia are deprived of their right to education in native language to which they are entitled to not only under the Constitution of Georgia but also under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Allow me to bring to your attention several incidents illustrating the implications of illegal occupation on children.

On May 23, 2013, in the Gali district of the occupied Abkhazia, Georgia, Special Forces of the Sokhumi occupation regime intruded into schools with Georgian-language classes and confiscated textbooks and computers.

There have been cases of ethnically-targeted violence against children in the occupied regions. Russian militaries station along the occupation line have not been allowing schoolchildren of Georgian ethnicity from the Gali district to cross the occupation line to attend classes on the Georgian-controlled territory, thus coercing them to go to the Russian-language school.

Some incidents have been reported on schoolchildren being severely beaten with the purpose of preventing them from attending classes on the other side of the occupation line.

Another serious impediment to the right to education is the practice of restrictions and detentions for crossing the occupation line. On August 23, 2013 four persons were detained in the occupied region of Tskhinvali, a six-year-old boy among them. On another occasion, in early 2013, a kidnapped child was released only after the village paid ransom. Such cases appear to be especially traumatic for children residing in the occupied regions.

In relation to healthcare issues, in November 2012, on the occupation line the Russian militaries detained the parents of a sick child from the Gali district, who needed medical care. As a result the child died.

We remain hopeful that the international community will adequately react to the illegal activities in the occupied regions of Georgia and the ongoing violation of human rights.

In conclusion, on behalf of Georgian Delegation, I would like to extend my gratitude to the entire international community for supporting Georgia’s endeavours to secure wholesome and vigorous future for protecting children’s rights. We once again reiterate our readiness to further cooperate with the UN agencies for protecting and promoting the rights of children.

I thank you.