



### 31<sup>st</sup> session of the Human Rights Council

Geneva, 29 February – 24 March 2016

#### Item 6: Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – Adoption of the report of Georgia

Thank you Mr. President,

The International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE) and Public Health Foundation of Georgia (PHFG) would like to extend appreciation to Georgia's commitment towards the UPR process and for the mid-term report submitted. During its review in 2011 and 2015, recommendations related to violence against children, including child sexual abuse have been accepted according to Georgian 2011 pledges on the UPR mechanism.

In its December 2015 report, the Ombudsman of Georgia pointed out "the alarming situation of the protection of children's rights", and despite the fact that "there is a high rate of violence against children in the country", public tolerance towards violence against children still predominant<sup>1</sup>. This statement echoed the concerns already expressed in the 2013 UNICEF study on Violence Against Children in Georgia. As for sexual abuse of children, the Ombudsman office recommended a specific action plan based on the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) ratified by Georgia in 2015.

Child-sexual abuse related recommendations have been issued during the UPR first cycle by Bulgaria and the Russian Federation<sup>2</sup>, and during the second cycle by Slovenia, Paraguay and Honduras<sup>3</sup>. Whilst efforts<sup>4</sup> to tackle child prostitution and pornography, domestic violence and abuse occurring in the family are commendable, concerns remain over the widespread but hidden sexual abuse in the community, schools, and child institutions as well as through Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). Children with disabilities are particularly affected.

Therefore, our organizations recommend to Georgia to:

1. **Modify and enforce the national legislation taking into account the Lanzarote Convention, to address sexual abuse in a comprehensive and multidisciplinary manner with child-sensitive and victim-centered approaches, not only within the family but in all settings where it occurs;**
2. **Increase awareness on violence against children and child sexual abuse, with special emphasis on children with disabilities, throughout the country;**
3. **Strengthen capacities and expertise of State law enforcement officials (*police & judiciary, teachers, social workers, medical professionals*) on child-friendly investigation and counseling procedures, hearing (interviews), complain decentralized mechanisms and data collection as well as coordination between professionals, care givers, civil society and government institutions;**
4. **Run free, permanent, accessible all over the country child helpline services 24h/24 and 7/7, and increase their capacity in promptly connecting with counseling, assistance, protection and recovery facilities and services to allow for effective access to justice;**
5. **Implement appropriate policies and programs for the prevention, rehabilitation-recovery and social reintegration of child victim's sexual abuse to protect victims from further victimization and trauma;**
6. **Provide the Committee on the Rights of the Child with accurate and updated information on child sexual abuse for its next review, and submit its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**

Thank you Mr. President.

<sup>1</sup> Ombudsman of Georgia, 10 December 2015.

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/17/11 (2011), §§ 105.38 (Bulgaria) & 106.26 (Russian Federation).

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/31/15 (2015), §§ 117.60 (Slovenia), 117.73 (Paraguay) & 118.14 (Honduras).

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/WG.6/23/GEO/1, Annex 1, National report submitted to the UPR 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle - Response to the Recommendations accepted by Georgia during the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle UPR (2011): "Criminalization of Domestic Violence; National Action Plan on Combating Domestic Violence and Protection of the Victims of Domestic Violence; Awareness Raising Campaigns and Trainings on the issues related to domestic violence; State Shelter; Referral Mechanism; Restrictive Orders; Services for the Victims of the Domestic Violence and Other Measures".