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29th session of the Human Rights Council
Geneva, 15 June – 3 July 2015

Item 6: Universal Periodic Review Outcomes – Armenia

Speaker: Diana FILATOVA

This statement is delivered by the **International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE)** and co-signed by:

- **Arevamanuk**
- **Pax Romana**
- **International Movement of Apostolate in the Independent Social Milieus (MIAMSI).**

Mr. President,

The International Catholic Child Bureau and its member organisation Arevamanuk based in Gyumri with local offices and projects in many *marzers*, Pax Romana and International Movement of Apostolate in the Independent Social Milieus (MIAMSI) commend Armenia for its engagement in the UPR process and for the mid-term report submitted in 2013. Whilst our organisations appreciate the acceptance of recommendations related to the rights of the child during the first and the second cycles, we do note that the accepted recommendations have not been fully implemented.

As the draft Law on domestic violence is in progress, our organisations recall the recommendation by *Thailand* urging Armenia to **“take concrete measures to combat violence against children and expedite the adoption of the draft law on domestic violence that would allow victims to file complaints and seek protection.”**¹

In addition, Armenia should alter its National Plan of Action for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (2013-2016) to incorporate specific measures aiming at preventing, protecting and assisting children at risk or victims of sexual abuse. As a matter of fact, the 1996 Law on the Rights of the Child does not provide for neither the definition nor mechanisms to combat a phenomenon that UNICEF portrayed as a “subject matter of “closed system” of family relations”² and shrouded in secrecy and abetted by shame. Though child sexual abuse is largely rejected by the Armenian society, according to the UNICEF 2003 study, it prevails in families, in children’s institutions and in schools, especially in boarding and special schools. The December 2014 Concept for combating violence against children that defines the main directions of the national policy towards prevention, elimination and rehabilitation of child abuse victims still needs to be translated into action.

Whilst the issue of neglect and child sexual abuse has not been duly reflected in the 2015 UPR Working Group report, we urge Armenia to promptly implement the 2010 recommendation by the *United Kingdom* urging to **“take immediate steps to make rape and sexual assault a criminal offence.”**³

The Armenian authorities should further:

- **develop a specific and comprehensive law on child abuse and neglect;**
- **undertake concrete steps to sensitise the public opinion in order to combat taboos surrounding child sexual abuse;**
- **avoid further harms and prejudices on victims by providing them with prompt and quality protection, care, support and counseling, and ensure that the referral and response system for child victims is accessible and functioning;**
- **ensure effective access to justice for victims by facilitating accessibility to complain mechanisms and bringing offenders to court;**
- **Provide the 2013-2016 National Plan of Action, as recommended by *Lithuania*, with “the necessary resourcing and strengthening its implementation, especially in respect of children in closed or partially-closed institutions.”**⁴

Thank you Mr. President.

¹ A/HRC/WG.6/21/L.8 (2015), § 120.110.

² Violence against Children in the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan 2003, http://www.unicef.org/armenia/Eng_violence_report1.pdf

³ United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, A/HRC/15/9 (2010), § 93.23

⁴ A/HRC/WG.6/21/L.8, § 120.39.