



Declassified¹

AS/Soc (2018) PV 05 add 2

4 December 2018

Asocpv05add2_2018

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

Minutes

of the hearing on “The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – how parliaments and member States of the Council of Europe can contribute” held in Lisbon, Portugal, on Tuesday, 18 September 2018, from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm

In the framework of the report currently in preparation on “The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – how parliaments and member States of the Council of Europe can contribute” (Rapporteur: Ms Jennifer De Temmerman, France, NR), the Committee held a public hearing with the participation of:

- Mr José Luís Carneiro, Secretary of State of the Portuguese Communities;
- Ms Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Violence against Children;
- Ambassador José Rui Carçoço, Director of the Council of Europe North-South Centre.

The Chairperson opened the hearing and welcomed the experts.

The Rapporteur, **Ms De Temmerman**, stressed the lack of awareness of sustainable development goals (SDGs) amongst the general population, despite most of them being highly relevant for their lives, including goals concerning quality education, social protection, healthy lives and affordable and clear energy. How could countries progress in achieving the SDGs without citizen involvement? The same lack of awareness also existed amongst parliamentarians. It would therefore be important to increase the visibility of the SDGs. The lack of evaluation criteria to measure progress in achieving the SDGs was another issue to tackle. During the annual High-Level Political Forum held in New York in July 2018 - which brings together business, civil society, government and political stakeholders to review progress in achieving the SDGs - the Finnish Minister of Environment, Energy and Housing had explained how the SDGs had been incorporated into the budgeting, planning and reporting of the government financial administration. In this respect, **Ms De Temmerman** stressed the role of parliaments in budgeting. Finally, she encouraged members to participate in the visit of the “Energy Observer” – first hydrogen, solar- and wind-energy producing, emissions-free ship – to be held in the afternoon.

Mr Luís Carneiro started by presenting his compliments to the Committee and stressed the importance of the work of the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly for Portugal. The SDGs were seeking to provide a holistic approach to global problems, linking human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Parliaments played an important role in conceptualising the goals with a multilevel approach, including with the involvement of civil society. They also played an important role in achieving the goals, including through adoption of laws and approval of national budgets. With a view to achieving the SDGs, national parliaments and governments should coordinate their work. In July 2017, Portugal had presented a voluntary national report assessing progress in the implementation of the SDGs in each governance area. An *ad hoc* parliamentary committee had also been established to monitor the implementation of the SDGs and to identify the obstacles to be removed to achieve the goals. Portugal had identified priority areas as follows: promotion of an inclusive society; innovation and transformation of the economy through social policies, transfer of knowledge from research centres/universities

¹The minutes were approved and declassified by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development at its meeting on 4 December 2018 in Paris.

to society; sustainability of national resources; and work on competitiveness. **Mr Luís Carneiro** finished his presentation by referring to the Council of Europe's and the Parliamentary Assembly's major contribution to achieving the SDGs in different areas, including gender equality and climate change, and reiterated Portugal's full commitment to achieving the SDGs.

Ms Santos Pais referred to the right of the child to protection from all forms of violence enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Council of Europe, with its Programme "Building a Europe for and with children", and its strategies for the rights of the child (including the new one that runs until 2021) had made an important contribution to achieving progress in this area. Similarly, the Parliamentary Assembly, and in particular, the Committee, had made a crucial contribution to the ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children. The 2030 agenda included a specific target to end all forms of violence against children (target 16.2) and several other SDG targets were addressing specific forms of violence, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. More than 800 000 children had participated in the development of the Agenda and in all regions, violence was at the top of their concerns.

The magnitude of violence against children was shocking: every five minutes, one child was dying because of violence and every year, at least 1 billion children below 18 years of age were experiencing some form of sexual, physical and emotional violence. Studies showed that violence could start as early as below 1 year of age (e.g. shouts and screams were frequent forms of discipline for children in this age group) and remained hidden. Violence had a long-lasting impact on children's lives with dramatic consequences, including becoming perpetrators of violence themselves, engaging in risky behaviours and criminal activities. It was also associated with serious economic costs: the yearly global cost of violence against children had been estimated to be as high as 7 trillion US dollars, equivalent to 8% of the world's GDP.

At national level, each country should develop a sustainable development strategy, i.e. an agenda that should be promoted through an inclusive and participatory process, based on solid evidence, informed by reliable data and supported by predictable and appropriate resources - to be allocated by parliaments. At the regional level, the past decade had been marked by the adoption of strong regional political declarations and action plans on violence against children, including the Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child. Regional initiatives had also helped to strengthen legal standards in this field. The Lanzarote and Istanbul Conventions were perfect illustrations of this process.

In September 2019, in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly, a high-level meeting would be held to review progress achieved in the first four years of implementation of the SDGs, including Goal 16. In July 2019, the High-Level Political Forum would host the first detailed review of Goal 16 (amongst others). Moreover, 2019 would mark the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Hence, 2019 presented a unique opportunity to mobilise action towards reaching target 16.2 and other SDG targets related to ending violence against children, and the Assembly's support in this would be welcomed.

Ambassador Caroço recalled that the North-South Centre worked on three main areas: youth, women and education. It had developed the Global Education concept, which incorporated competences for formal and non-formal educators in the field of human rights, intercultural dialogue, peace and conflict prevention, and sustainable development. The concept encompassed many of the SDGs, in particular goals 4 (quality education); 5 (gender equality); 16 (peace and justice) and 17 (partnerships for the goals). It also contributed to goals 1 (no poverty); 10 (reduced inequalities); 11 (sustainable cities and communities); 12 (responsible consumption); 13 (climate action). The promotion of Global Education and corresponding SDGs was done through three pillars: pedagogical support, advocacy and networking. Pedagogical support was provided for educators (e.g. handbook and e-learning courses) as well as for experts who were trained on women's participation in public life and on women's access to rights. Advocacy activities included congresses, national and regional seminars and follow-up meetings aimed at promoting and monitoring recommendations in the field of Policy Making and Curricula Development, as well as workshops for strengthening the capacity of women's organisations. There was a network of national Global Education coordinators relaying the work of the North-South Centre and coordinating a yearly awareness raising event, i.e. the Global Education Week. There was also a Euro-Med Women Network and a Network of Universities on Youth and Global Citizenship.

In 2015, a reference to the SDGs had been introduced in all Global Education advocacy, capacity-building and awareness-raising activities, underlining the complementarities between Global Education concept and Goals 4, 5, 16 and 17. Global Education Guidelines were being revised and the complementarities between Global Education and the SDGs were underlined throughout the revised chapters. Moreover, the Centre was in the process of introducing the reference to Development in the concept of Global Education, which would soon become "Global Development Education". The 9th edition of the Global Education Training Course for Youth Multipliers which had taken place in Mollina (Spain) from 10-14 September 2018, had gathered young people from 58 countries where discussions had focused on the SDGs. The Centre strongly believed in a bottom-up

and participatory approach. Youth participation and empowerment were crucial with a view to progressing in the SDGs.

Baroness Massey stressed the importance of empowering adolescents and children; without their contribution and involvement the child-related SDGs would be diluted. Young people were advocates for change. She welcomed the work of the North-South Centre on Global Education and citizenship. The Sub-Committee on Children she chaired was exploring ways to improve children and young people's involvement in Council of Europe work. She proposed to include in the report the issue of adolescent health and child and youth participation.

Mr Kiral asked about the United Nations' work on violence against children in armed conflicts. What was the UN's position in respect of efforts made to improve the situation of children in conflict zones such as in Ukraine, Syria or Azerbaijan? As he would be in New York to attend the High-level meeting on tuberculosis the following week, he would be keen on meeting Ms Santos Pais for a bilateral meeting on this issue.

Ms Kyriakides referred to the involvement of the Parliamentary Assembly in the successful ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children. She was concerned about forms of violence which often passed under the radar, such as psychological violence in families and corporal punishment.

Ms Benning noted that Germany had a strategy on sustainability which was reviewed every two years. She was addressing Goal 11 in her report on sustainable urban development. All the reports under preparation in the Committee should be contributing to the SDGs.

Mr Amraoui explained that according to the SDG Centre for Africa, Morocco was the leading country in the African continent in terms of progress made in achieving the goals. The Europe's neighbourhood policy had been very helpful in this context.

Ms McCarthy pointed out that the British government perceived the SDGs as a continuation of the millennium development goals, and considered they were irrelevant for the United Kingdom. Other countries were far more advanced in developing national policies with a view to achieving the SDGs.

Mr Luís Carneiro thought that protecting children from sexual violence was one of the first priorities, together with other important related issues such access to health care and education. An experiment had been carried out in Portugal – and had received positive feedback – with a view to ensuring access to health care for the most fragile groups, including the elderly and children. It consisted of sending home health care teams, including doctors and nurses, to remote areas in the country. He stressed the importance of involving local and regional authorities in implementing and monitoring SDG-related policies. Local and regional authorities could also bring more young people into the debate. He also reiterated Portugal's commitment to voluntary national reports and the value of national parliaments' work in achieving the SDGs.

Ms Santos Pais explained that there was a difference between the millennium development goals and the SDGs. The latter were not about the global north helping the global south. Worldwide, all countries could do better in all areas covered by the SDGs, which could not be seen in isolation. Violence against children was a perfect example to illustrate this. If countries failed to protect children from violence, this would have a huge health impact which most countries were not ready to deal with. She also stressed that many forms violence against children were simply unknown. Corporal punishment continued to be applied, including in some Council of Europe member States, hence the Council of Europe's anti-smacking campaign, which could be re-launched. Countries had a lot to learn from each other and had a responsibility to invest in children who were the agents of change. The resolution that would come out of the Assembly would have a huge impact for the upcoming events around children. Concerning children in armed conflicts, she stressed that there was a specific goal about child soldiers (goal 8) and a special UN representative. She noted however that most violence against children was taking place in the family and in institutions.

Ms De Temmerman thanked the experts for their valuable contribution. She had started to analyse the national voluntary reports, which would be very useful in finalising her own report. In France, there was a general commissioner for sustainable development and he had proposed a road map to progress in the SDGs.

The Committee agreed to the Rapporteur's proposal to declassify her introductory memorandum.

The Chairperson thanked the experts and members for their contributions and closed the hearing.

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development
Commission des questions sociales, de la santé et du développement durable

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Mr/ M. Slobodan PETROVIĆ

Mr/ M. Xhavit HALITI

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PARTNERS FOR DEMOCRACY / PARTENAIRES POUR LA DEMOCRATIE

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Mr/ M. Aïlal AMRAOUI

SPECIAL GUESTS / INVITES SPECIAUX

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Ms/ Mme Sevdal VALJEVICIC, Delegation Secretary, Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to PACE/ *Secrétaire de délégation, délégation de la Bosnie et Herzégovine à l'APCE ;*

Ms/ Mme Veronika KRUPOVÁ, Delegation Secretary, Delegation of the Czech Republic to PACE/ *Secrétaire de délégation, délégation de la République tchèque à l'APCE*

Ms/ Mme Ariana MUSLIU SHOSHI, Coordinator, Delegation of Kosovo to PACE/ *Coordinatrice, délégation du Kosovo à l'APCE ;*

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Ms/ Mme Ana GUAPO, Delegation Secretary, Portuguese delegation to PACE / *Secrétaire de délégation, délégation du Portugal à l'APCE ;*

Ms/ Mme Francesca ARBOGAST, Secretary of the Social Democrats and Greens Group/ *Secrétaire du groupe social-démocrate et des Verts ;*

EXPERTS

Ms/ Mme Marta Maria DE MORAIS DOS SANTOS PAIS, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Violence against Children/ *Représentante Spéciale du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies chargée de la question de la violence à l'encontre des enfants ;*

ALSO PRESENT / EGALEMENT PRESENTS

Ms/ Mme Sophie QUECKE, Assistant to Ms Benning (MP)/ *Assistante de Mme Benning, députée ;*

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Mr/ M. José Rui CAROÇO, Director of the Council of Europe North-South Centre/ *Directeur du Centre Nord-Sud du Conseil de l'Europe* ;

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