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**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1002nd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

29 May 2014

**On International Children's Day**

Mr. Chairperson,

International Children's Day will be celebrated around the world on 1 June. It is one of the oldest international holidays. The idea was first advocated at the World Conference in Geneva in 1925, and it was established as an official holiday in November 1949 by decision of the Women's International Democratic Federation with the support of the United Nations.

The protection of children is one of the most important areas of activity of many international and regional organizations. The OSCE participating States agreed in Copenhagen in 1990 to "accord particular attention to the recognition of the rights of the child, his civil rights and his individual freedoms, his economic, social and cultural rights, and his right to special protection against all forms of violence and exploitation". This idea was also confirmed by the leaders of the OSCE countries in Istanbul in 1999.

Unfortunately, in the last ten years the "topic of the child" has been neglected within the OSCE. Instead, issues relating to the protection of various so-called vulnerable and socially disadvantaged groups have been actively placed on our Organization's agenda. What is more, very often there are neither commitments nor consensus on these matters within the OSCE. Nevertheless, the OSCE holds various events on these topics, and the individual executive structures even develop recommendations which are then presented as being based on consensus. Yet with all respect for the needs of these groups of the population, they are adults with legal capacity who can stand up for themselves and draw public attention to their problems.

In the vulnerable population, there is only one group, the largest and least protected one. Children are in particular need of our support and protection. Their health, safety and mental and moral development depend on us, the adults. In the overwhelming majority of cases they can neither protect themselves nor assert their rights.

It is disappointing that our Western partners go no further than general declarations on this issue. There are OSCE commitments and serious problems in this area in virtually every country. We believe the OSCE should deal with them in a substantive manner.

In all of our countries, including Russia, there are still many problems which need to be worked on in order to improve the position of children. It would be worth while to pay more attention to improved access to education and the quality of teaching, social protection and medical support for children, to create an environment for the development of children's creativity and leisure, as well as to combine efforts to combat paedophilia and sexual and domestic violence against children and protect the rights of children in mixed and adoptive families. Finally, a major OSCE event should be planned at which the whole range of issues relating to the protection of children could be discussed. Perhaps it is now time to also think about developing a Ministerial Council decision on this subject.

We believe that the holiday coming up on 1 June should be a reminder to the OSCE participating States of the fact that we are all responsible for what happens in our future, in which every child is of supreme value, and simply a guarantee of the fact that there will be a future.

Thank you for your attention.