

# Crimes against the Child

## Crimes against Humanity

**International Round Table organised by AMADE  
Under the Patronage of UNESCO**

25-26 April 2003  
Monaco

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**Opening Speech  
by His Excellency Mr Patrick LECLERCQ,  
Minister of State, Principality of Monaco**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I consider it my privilege to welcome you here today, to the Ministry of State, at the invitation of the World Association of Children's Friends, to inaugurate the first session of the Round Table on "Crimes against the child, crimes against humanity".

It is an honour to host this meeting on the year that celebrates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AMADE. I would like to seize this opportunity to pay tribute to AMADE, founded by Her Serene Highness Princess GRACE of Monaco, for taking the initiative in formulating this round table, and for the relentless determination shown in pursuing this issue.

Forty years of endeavour to obtain a better recognition and protection of the fundamental rights of the child in order to ensure that the core principles of children's rights are translated into reality, is testimony to the strong commitment and goodwill of all the men and women assembled by AMADE.

Their struggle however is far from over. The theme of this Round Table confronts us once again with the tragic reality of crimes committed all too often against children both in times of peace and war. It also confronts us with the development of an international criminality aimed at the exploitation of children for the horrendous purposes that are so frequently exposed in the media.

Your task is to explore all avenues that could enhance the prevention of those crimes and a more effective sanction of their perpetrators.

These aims were emphasised in the Declaration by His Serene Highness Crown Prince ALBERT of Monaco at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, in New York, in May last year.

In order to achieve those aims in a realistic and successful way, we must carefully review all the issues at stake. This, I believe, will be the focus of the discussions to which you have been invited by Her Royal Highness the Princess of HANOVER, President of AMADE, with the enlightened support from Mr Jacques DANOIS, Secretary-General. I wish to thank you all, distinguished experts in international humanitarian and criminal law, specialists in the area of the rights of the child, and representatives of international bodies and non-governmental organisations, for accepting this invitation.

The purpose of this meeting is to examine a highly sensitive issue that can no longer be ignored, namely the legal status of the child. It has become a growing realisation at the international level that the specific nature of the threat posed to children and the crimes committed against them due to their extreme vulnerability, has made it imperative that action must be taken to protect them. To deal with this issue, we must carry out an examination of all existing legal instruments at both national and international levels in order to identify the numerous gaps that continue to exist in contemporary international criminal law, and endeavour to make relevant proposals in order to fill those gaps, particularly with regard to the role of the newly established International Criminal Court. It shall be your task to define the legal means to ensure that no crime perpetrated against children goes unpunished.

This is a very ambitious project but I am certain that we all regard this as a duty not only to the children but also to the whole of humanity. By better protecting the rights of the child, we shall foster the development of an harmonious society: for there can be no doubt that abused children will develop into adults without boundaries, deprived of the traditional frames of reference and the social bonds necessary to the cohesion of a society.

It will therefore be for you to seek all existing solutions in the domain of international criminal and humanitarian law to ensure a more effective protection of children in order to allow them to assert themselves as responsible adults in their own community.

On behalf of the Government of Monaco, I wish you every success with this extremely important undertaking.

Thank you.

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