

Crimes against the Child

Crimes against Humanity

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

25-26 April 2003
Monaco

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Sergio VIEIRA de MELLO,
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Read by Mr Joël MERMET, Human Rights Officer,
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights***

Your Royal Highness,

Minister,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by sincerely thanking AMADE and its President, Her Royal Highness the Princess of HANOVER, as well as the Government of Monaco, for inviting the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to take part in this meeting. I also wish to avail myself of this opportunity to emphasise the importance of the contribution made by AMADE to the protection of children's rights, here in Monaco and throughout the world, over the past forty years.

The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by nearly all the states in the world shows the level of commitment that the international community pledges in favour of a better protection of the human rights of young people under the age of 18 years, this being regarded as the most vulnerable criterion.

More recently, the adoption and entry into force of the two Optional Protocols to this Convention, concerning the involvement of children in armed conflicts and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, can be regarded as a new step forward to a better recognition of the fundamental rights of the child. In compliance with the provisions of those legal instruments, State Parties shall endeavour to prosecute and punish those who perpetrate crimes against children as defined in the two Optional Protocols.

* Translated into English by AMADE from the original statement read in French.

To quote Albert CAMUS : "one cannot understand the suffering of the child". Sadly, we all share terrible memories told of young boys and girls who one day found themselves confronted with acts of cruelty by adults.

More often than not, crimes committed against children are not always visible. In most cases such acts of violence happen in situations where they are not to be witnessed by those who would actually be in a position to prevent and denounce such acts.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has decided to join with UNICEF and the World Health Organisation to lend its support to Mr Paulo Sergio PINHEIRO who was recently appointed by the UN Secretary General as a special expert to conduct an in-depth study on violence against children. This study will aim to draw up recommendations to States for better prevention techniques and to sanction all forms of violence targeted at children.

Because all crimes perpetrated against children are unacceptable and intolerable, we must unite to make every effort to ensure that the protection of children's rights becomes a true priority.

Thank you for your attention

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