

EOI - Doha Conference – 2024

On October 14, a conference of the European Ombudsman Institute was held in cooperation with the National Committee for Human Rights of Qatar. The subject of the conference was the protection of the rights of children and other vulnerable groups.

EOI President Dragan Milkov opened the Conference.



He stressed out that Childhood is arguably the most vulnerable period of human life. Children are highly dependent on others to satisfy their basic needs, and this makes them particularly vulnerable. This is, of course, true for other stages of life as well. Many elderly people, for example, are not able to care for themselves. However, they are at least in principle entitled to choose the persons that care for them, and not all elderly people are dependent in the same way as children are. War and migration events made the position of children even worse. Children became totally unprotected victims. Digital era, internet social media bring new dangers for children, unknown till recently.

The welcome speech on behalf of the host was given by Mr. Sultan bin Hassan Al-Jamali-General Secretary of the Qatar National Committee for Human Rights. The opening speech was delivered also by Mr. Dawoud Almassri, Head of Analysis and Outreach Center in Doha - Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.



NHRC Speaker, Mr. **Dragan Milkov** - EOI President, Mr. **Sultan bin Hassan Al-Jamali**-Secretary General of Qatar National Human Rights Committee, Mr. **Dawoud Almassri**, Head of Analysis and Outreach Hub in Doha – Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict

In addition to the members of the European Ombudsman Institute, reports were also submitted by other participants, primarily participants from the partner side from Qatar. Representatives of ombudsmen from different countries took part in the work of the conference, as well as, representatives of some government agencies and specialized United Nations agencies, human rights experts, academics, and representatives of civil society and the media.



Conference was divided in three sessions.

In the morning part of the conference, two sessions were held: 1. protection of children and other vulnerable groups during war and migration; and 2. Protection from Cyber Threats – Children and Adolescents in the Digital Age.



Mr. Şeref Malkoç- Chief Ombudsman of Türkiye



Mrs. Tatiana Moskalkova- High Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation

In the afternoon part of the conference, papers were presented on the following topics:
The Role of Ombudsmen in Protecting the Rights of Children and Vulnerable Groups.



Mr. Nasser Sultan Al-Mari - Director of the Legal Affairs Department NHRC Qatar;
Mrs. Anna Demeneva - Office of Commissdioner for Human Rights, Sverdlovsk, Russia; **Mrs. Ana Dzhumalieva**, President of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination of Bulgaria; **Mr. Sergey Baburkin**, Commissioner for Human Rights, Yaroslavl region, Russia

The Conference adopted following **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**:

1. The effective enforcement of international treaties on the rights of children and other vulnerable groups, the implementation of the recommendations of relevant regional and international mechanisms, and the intensification of efforts to reach a binding international convention on the rights of older persons.
2. Ensuring the implementation of the principle of the simultaneous application of international humanitarian law and international human rights law during armed conflicts and working to protect children and other vulnerable groups by providing safe corridors to enable them to evacuate when necessary and to obtain relief services.

3. Harmonizing national legislation with the requirements of international treaties, and enacting comprehensive legislation to protect children, women, persons with disabilities, the elderly and migrants from all forms of violence, discrimination and exploitation.
4. Developing response programs, especially in emergency situations, with the aim of protecting children and other vulnerable groups from all forms of violence, exploitation and trafficking, activating hotlines to receive complaints and provide support, shelter and legal assistance services, and working to reunite families and provide alternative care programs for children who have lost their families in times of armed conflict or in the context of migration, while ensuring that all children have access to basic rights, especially the right to education.
5. Simplifying procedures for accessing national redress mechanisms and enhancing the capacity of judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officials through various means, including international cooperation.
6. Affirming the right of children and other vulnerable groups to access a safe digital environment and emphasizing the need for their protection from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse in the digital space.
7. Enhancing digital protection by integrating digital education into educational curricula, training teachers, children and their parents on the safe and responsible use of the Internet, developing prevention tools and encouraging technological innovations to ensure the protection of children, involving national institutions in developing legislation, public policies and other measures related to the protection of children in the digital environment, and working to include children's digital rights in their manuals and annual reports.
8. Operationalizing the roles of NHRIs in general monitoring, data collection, awareness raising and education on the rights of children and other vulnerable groups and working on developing ways of cooperation between NHRIs to exchange experiences and best practices among them and encourage effective partnerships between them and governments, regional and international mechanisms, and civil society.
9. Supporting efforts to find peaceful solutions to current international crises, emphasizing the prevention of targeting children, women and other vulnerable groups in areas of armed conflict, and preventing the targeting of infrastructure that provides indispensable services for the survival of the population, with the need to end impunity for all crimes committed in violation of relevant international laws.

In conclusion: The participants thank the National Human Rights Committee of the State of Qatar and the European Ombudsman Institute and affirm their determination to work to implement these recommendations in cooperation with governments, national institutions and relevant regional and international bodies.