



# BELARUS

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**United Nations  
General Assembly**

**Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the  
Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children**

**11 December 2007**

**Statement by**

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All children in the world cry the same language. In this regard they are perfectly alike. But at the same time they are very different.

**Children mirror the State they live in.** The way children are treated defines the moral health and the degree of maturity of the State.

The Republic of Belarus regards improvement of the situation of children and comprehensive protection of their rights as an essential precondition of the sustainable development of our state and of the world community at large.

Back in 1993 Belarus was the **first** country in the post-Soviet space to adopt a law on the rights of the child.

Recommendations contained in the 'World Fit for Children' document of the special session of the General Assembly were enshrined in the **national strategy of Belarus on improvement of the status of children.**

It is noteworthy that children participated in elaboration of this strategy by making their proposals at the national and regional children's fora.

The President's programme 'Children of Belarus' is being implemented since 1998. It seeks to ensure the all-round physical, intellectual and moral development of children, to improve the quality of their life, to teach children to follow a healthy way of life, to form their legal self-consciousness, to involve them in decision-making.

**The state provides care for all categories of children:** be they in good health or sick, in a family or orphans. Special state support is given to young talents.

Especially gratifying is the fact that **birth-rate in Belarus has been steadily increasing** since 2004. The demographic situation has positive dynamics. Ever more families have three or more children. This is a result of state policy to provide a large-scale support of mother and child, of family, especially those with many children.

The Republic of Belarus is among the countries with **low infant and child mortality rate.** Over the past ten years the infant mortality rate in Belarus has decreased by half and is at the lowest level in the Commonwealth of Independent States – 5.6 per cent (including infants who were born weighing 0.5 – 1 kg).

Vaccination coverage is 99.2 per cent. Up to the age of two years children are provided with free nutrition.

**All children receive free secondary schooling.** Eighty-two per cent of children are in pre-primary education.

There is a special category of children in our country – **children of Chernobyl** who were born and live in the areas struck by the Chernobyl disaster. They are provided with special medical observation, annual clinical examination, free meals at school, free stay and treatment in health centres and sanatoria.

Opening of **the photo exhibition “Chernobyl Seen by Children”** organised by the Permanent Missions of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and UNICEF takes place **today**, 11 December 2007, at **6 p.m. in the South Lobby** of the Secretariat Building. All are invited to attend.

We do everything possible to ensure a barrier-free environment for **children with peculiarities of psycho-physical development**. To achieve this we have critically changed the approach to educating and bringing up such children: instead of specialised boarding schools we introduce integrated education structures which allow for these children to live in their own family and receive education together with other children. Such families are provided with the necessary psychological and educational support.

**Orphan children** are a subject of anguish for any state. The main task is to give these children a new family or help them find a new home. In Belarus the state does everything possible to promote adoption, family foster care and other forms of family upbringing. Currently 74 per cent of orphan children find themselves in some form of family care. In some regions of Belarus this figure reaches 100 per cent.

Special attention in our country is paid to the problems of **social orphanhood**. The phenomenon of orphans with living parents is a disgrace to modern society. This is why in 2006 the President of the Republic of Belarus signed a decree which provides state maintenance for children who are socially endangered because of the dire neglect by their parents of their responsibilities for care and support of children. Legal proceedings, including criminal, are instituted against such parents.

There is another problem which deserves the most serious attention. In the international arena the Republic of Belarus has been actively promoting initiatives to improve coordination of international efforts **to fight human trafficking**. At its 61<sup>st</sup> session the General Assembly adopted a resolution initiated by Belarus ‘Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons’. Belarus encourages and organises various international fora on this subject, including the international conference on trafficking in women and girls held in the UN headquarters in New York this year. We reiterate our belief that **the problem of human trafficking should be taken up by the General Assembly in the framework of its thematic debates**.

Especially alarming are the crimes which involve **trafficking in children** and **child pornography**. Production and distribution of child pornography on the internet happen on a truly menacing scale. Just think about it: since 1996 the amount of child pornography available on the internet has increased **twentyfold**. The overall number of websites which offer child pornography is well over **100 thousand**. To counter these vile phenomena effectively we need both closer international cooperation and self-sufficient national legislation.

Today’s meeting of the General Assembly is deeply symbolical for the Republic of Belarus because the year 2007 was proclaimed in our country a **Year of the Child**.

We should do everything possible to improve the situation of children in all countries of the world steadily and significantly. These efforts as well as implementation of the Declaration and the Plan of Action adopted at the special session of the General Assembly in 2002 will undoubtedly be assisted by **consolidation of existing and creation of new partnerships at the global, regional and national levels**.

This is why we welcome the fact that UNICEF bases its child protection strategy on the premise of **the trinity of partners** – Member States, international organisations and civil society. In 21<sup>st</sup> century we have to put an end to the shame of modern civilisation – trafficking in children and their involvement in military conflicts. The interagency coordination group on fighting human trafficking should play a leading role in this process.

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Children are our future. What world our children grow in, what they see around them, what conditions their understanding of the world is going to determine ultimately the future of our states and of the whole of humankind.

Let us by our common effort build a world not just fit for children.

Let us build **a world worthy of children, worthy of their future**.