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**Address by the Commissioner for Children's Rights in Cyprus,**  
**Ms Despo Livaniou Michaelide,**  
**at the Conference of the European project titled**  
**'Securing the Best Interest of the Child in Educational School Administration'**  
**(SEBI)**  
**Friday 4 November, 2022**  
(17:45 online)

I am honoured to welcome all of you today to this conference, which is organised by the consortium of the European SEBI project. This is a great opportunity to stress the outcomes of the project and to raise awareness among stakeholders on issues relating to the Best Interest of the Child in educational settings.

The whole world has faced extreme conditions in the recent pandemic. This has been a challenge for Commissioners for Children to ensure that, children's rights are secured and guaranteed, despite the global crisis and all subsequent threats. We have committed ourselves to developing efficient frameworks to guarantee a happy childhood for every individual in the world. Our team in the SEBI project has worked hard to promote this goal and to facilitate the best interest of the child in education.

Part of my role as a Commissioner is to initiate activities which promote awareness-raising and sensitivity on children's rights. Continuous efforts are needed to ensure that policies, measures and administrative practices are constantly improved to comply with the standards of the Convention. Even when the States are facing challenges and unpredictable situations, it is still essential to correspond to the entire spectrum of children's rights, respecting diversity and promoting children's participation in all the matters affecting them.

In order to be in accordance with the Convention on Children's Rights, education must embody the fundamental human values, specifically: democracy, equality and justice. It is crucial to provide equal opportunities and to secure accessibility and inclusiveness, on the ground of non-discrimination, for each and every child. It must be clearly recognized that every individual has different needs and a different learning style, thus it would be inappropriate to provide 'one-size education that fits to all'. Consequently, there is an enormous responsibility on behalf of the education providers to reassure that the Best Interest of the Child is properly assessed and determined and it is considered as a priority, in all decisions and policies that affect them.

The empowerment of education professionals is an essential component in securing the Best Interest, therefore, there must be a constant effort to improve training and to increase the knowledge and skills of all education professionals. School collaboration with stakeholders must be enhanced and all reasonable accommodation must be provided to support students' participation in a flexible and inclusive curriculum. Meanwhile, pupils' participation in decision-making must be guaranteed, ensuring their right to be well-informed and their views to be taken into serious consideration in all decisions, policies and practices. The school culture must be based on genuine communication and must provide a comfortable and friendly environment and a feeling of security for all the children. Behavioural manners must support respect, human dignity and trust.

In order to fulfil the provisions of the Convention, I also consider important the monitoring of the State's budgetary allocations for the implementation of programmes and actions specifically targeted to children, especially to those belonging to disadvantaged groups. It is crucial to reassure the accessibility, the quality and the effectiveness of services for children, in order to establish their Best Interest. Thus, it is essential to undertake more initiatives to make the Convention Principles widely known

in educational administration, with proper training and dissemination activities.

We must strengthen our commitment to secure children's rights and support the implementation of international standards. Thus, building a culture of children's rights, based on comprehensive knowledge of their capacities and finding effective ways to overcome any obstacles, should be a never-ending process.

Transposing the provisions of the Convention into concrete actions that will upgrade children's lives in Europe, is not an easy task. Therefore, co-operation between educators, government, independent institutions, social partners, academia, NGOs, local communities and others, is vital. I constantly work towards this direction, aiming to bring together all actors engaged in the field of promoting children's rights and to establish high standards, in an effort to achieve sustainability and collaborative hard work.

It is my belief that, this event will contribute to the development of better policies and the dissemination of good practices across Europe. Altogether, we can send a powerful message, at national and international level, about the vital importance of implementing the values and the

principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in any effort to enhance the quality of education worldwide.

I hope that our work will provide a solid ground for action to be undertaken towards this direction. I wish you to enjoy a productive and creative conference!

XK/ME