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Press Release

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Human Rights and Children under the spotlight at the 17th Informal ASEM Seminar

The 17th Informal Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Human Rights Seminar brought together over 70 experts, professionals, academics, civil society and government officials from Europe and Asia to discuss the status of rights of children on 7-9 November 2017 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

In his opening speech on 7 November, the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of Bulgaria, Mr. Biser PETROV, has called for reducing poverty and social exclusion of children, "*The multifaceted dimension of child poverty needs an integrated approach to tackle it, including a synergy of the respective sectoral policies*". Mr. Georg GEORGIEV, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, highlighted the need "*for a good level of communication among relevant stakeholders - the government on one hand, and the civil society and the international partners on the other hand*".

Mr. Henri PLAGNOL, Conseiller d'Etat of France, called for "*States to systematically promote child-friendly practices specifically nowadays as countries are facing major international challenges*". Ms. Mikiko OTANI, Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, said in her keynote address: "*the ultimate goal of the whole system of international protection of human rights is to realize human rights of each and every individual at the national level.*" She further elaborated that "*all regional legally binding instruments and cooperation frameworks relevant for children...will lead to realization of human rights of all children in their daily lives in family, school, community and society*".

Speaking on behalf of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), Ambassador Karsten WARNECKE acknowledged "*the exploitation of children as a major challenge for ASEM countries*" and highlighted the need "*for Asia and Europe to seek viable and appropriate solutions through bilateral and regional dialogue to tackle the persistent problem of child rights' abuses*".

The closed-door working groups discussed 3 themes: *International Partnership and State Provision for Survival and Development of Children, Protection of Vulnerable Children, and Participation and Involvement of Children in Decision-Making*, with the contributions of Prof. Ton LIEFAARD, Leiden University, Dr. Bina D'COSTA, UNICEF

Office of Research - Innocenti, and Ms Amihan ABUEVA, Child Rights Coalition in Asia.

The Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights series is co-organised by ASEF, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (nominated by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland (FDFA). ASEF's contribution is with the financial support of the European Union and the Section for Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden, Bangkok, Thailand.

The 17th Seminar was hosted by the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the State Agency for Child Protection, Bulgaria.

About the Organisers



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, sustainable development, economy and public health.

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

ASEF runs more than 25 projects a year, consisting of around 100 activities, mainly conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures, publications, and online platforms, together with about 125 partner organisations. Each year over 3,000 Asians and Europeans participate in ASEF's activities, and much wider audiences are reached through its various events, networks and web-portals.

For more information, please visit www.ASEF.org



The **Raoul Wallenberg Institute** of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law is an independent academic institution dedicated to the promotion of human rights through research, training and education. Established in 1984 at the Faculty of Law at Lund University, Sweden, the institute is currently involved in organising in Lund two Masters Programs and an interdisciplinary human rights programme at the undergraduate level. Host of one of the largest human rights libraries in the Nordic countries and engaged in various research and publication activities, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute provides researchers and students with a conducive study environment. The Institute maintains extensive relationships with academic human rights institutions worldwide. www.rwi.lu.se



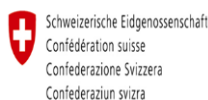
The **French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs** (MEAE), as a founding member of ASEM, is pleased to have supported the ASEM human rights dialogue since its inception in 1997.

For more information, please visit www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/



The **Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs** is the prime agency of the Philippine government responsible for the pursuit of the State's foreign policy. It is also responsible for the coordination and execution of the foreign policies of the country and the conduct of its foreign relations.

For more information, please visit www.dfa.gov.ph



The **Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland** (FDFA) forms and coordinates Swiss foreign policy on behalf of the Federal Council, pursues foreign policy objectives, safeguards the interests of Switzerland and promotes Swiss values.

For more information, please visit www.eda.admin.ch



The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Republic of Bulgaria** coordinates and guides the human rights policy of the country in international forums. Following the national priorities, the Ministry presents Bulgarian good practices in the area of human rights and participates actively in relevant bilateral and multilateral events.
For more information, please visit www.mfa.bg



The **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria**, coordinates the national policy in labour, employment and social services, including child protection, early child development and deinstitutionalization of child care.
For more information, please visit <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/index.php?lang=eng>



State Agency for Child Protection, Bulgaria is a specialized governmental body for management, coordination and control of the state policy and all related activities in the field of child protection in Bulgaria.
For more information, please visit <https://sacp.government.bg/bg/>

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With the support of the Section for Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden,
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