



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
G E N E V A**

Check against delivery

STATEMENT

BY

H. E. MS. JADRANKA KOSOR

**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

61st Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights

15 March 2005

Geneva

Mr. Chairman,
Madam High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman and your Bureau on your election, and the Secretariat of this Commission for the preparation of numerous reports that will serve as the basis for its important outcomes in the field of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

As a candidate country, the Republic of Croatia aligns itself with the Statement of the European Union. However, I would like to make a few remarks on behalf of Croatian Government.

I will deliver the shorter statement, and the longer version will be distributed.

Today, when global threats of terrorism, natural and man made disasters such as wars and internal conflicts, HIV-AIDS pandemic, and trafficking in human beings, undermine the protection of human rights and freedoms, we need global responses for the protection of human rights reflected in the activities of this Commission.

My Government is strongly committed to combating terrorism in all its forms and it recognizes the necessity of a strong international co-operation for the elaboration of policies and the implementation of measures to prevent and combat terrorism and protect the human rights of the victims of terrorism.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Croatia welcomes the Report of the High Level Panel on the reform of the UN system as a comprehensive one with a number of recommendations, which deserve full consideration of the Member States. All the reform measures must be carefully elaborated in order to strengthen, and not to weaken, the role of this Commission as a principal intergovernmental body of the United Nations for the protection and promotion of human rights. At this stage my delegation would like to draw attention to the importance of avoiding possible duplication and overlapping of mandates of the envisaged bodies in the field of human rights. We hope that substantive deliberations on this matter will take place.

Croatia, as a State party to six UN human rights treaties, follows with great interest the reform process of the UN treaty bodies system. The current work and recommendations of treaty bodies for each State Party are important instruments for the protection of human rights at the national level. It is important to strengthen the whole system and to make it more efficient for the implementation of human rights treaties at the national level.

At the beginning of this year the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment by which protection of persons deprived of their liberty will be strengthened.

Two years ago, Croatia extended a standing invitation to all thematic special procedures of this Commission. I am very glad to inform you that this year the Representative of the UN Secretary General on Human Rights and Displaced Persons Mr. Walter Kalin has announced his visit to my country. Since issues of refugees and displaced persons are very high at the Government's agenda, this visit will provide the opportunity to discuss the remaining challenges and solutions connected with internally displaced persons.

Croatia also supports the elaboration of an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concerning the establishment of communication procedure.

Croatia is firmly committed to the universal abolition of the death penalty and has brought all its legislation in line with this postulate. We are calling for a general worldwide abolition of death penalty.

Mr. Chairman,

National human rights institutions are guardians of human rights with the capacity to promote, monitor and evaluate the protection of human rights within countries. The Commission's efforts to support their establishment and improve the protection of human rights at the national level are more than crucial. Also, international co-operation and the participation of civil society are essential in building the wide range of national institutions.

In Croatia, we are in the process of transforming the Human Right Center developed under the project of technical cooperation between the Government and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights over the past two years into an independent institution established in accordance with the Paris principles.

Indeed, we are very grateful for the support of Madame Louis Arbour High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office for their support.

Mr. Chairman,

Croatia is resolved to actively confront the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings, the slavery of the 21st century. To deal with this issue of transnational proportions, close co-operation and co-ordination on regional and global level are essential.

We would like to welcome newly appointed Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children Ms. Sigma Huda and her observations in her first report prepared for the Commission on Human Rights. We fully endorse her view that trafficking represents the denial of virtually all human rights.

On the national level, Croatia has strengthened its legislative framework for the prosecution of perpetrators who have committed the crime of trafficking in persons. The Criminal Code was amended and trafficking in persons is defined as a separate criminal offence. Furthermore the Criminal Proceedings Law, the Juvenile Courts Law, the Witness Protection Law and the Law on Foreigners provide a legal framework for the protection of victims of trafficking in persons. Also, the new Instruction on the regulation of the residence of trafficking victims has been adopted. It provides issuance of residence permit regardless of victims cooperation with the authorities.

The Government has also enacted a new strategy regarding trafficking in human beings - the National Program for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons, and its Operative Plan for 2005. The Plan elaborates the following chapters:

- legislative framework,
- assistance to and protection of victims,
- prevention,
- education,
- international co-operation,
- coordination of activities.

Also, a working group with an aim to elaborate a special plan concerning trafficking in children has been established.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Croatia is strongly committed to the full cooperation with the ICTY, to the resolution of problems of missing persons, to the return of refugees and displaced persons as well as many other human rights and humanitarian issues connected with the post war recovery.

Allow me to briefly touch upon some issues on the agenda of this Commission - the protection and promotion of the rights of: women, children, minorities and persons with disabilities.

I have just returned from the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, that has by consensus adopted its Declaration that fully reaffirms the commitments made ten years ago in Beijing and calls for their accelerated implementation.

The Croatian Government is strongly committed to the full and effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its optional Protocol. In January this year the Committee on the Elimination on Discrimination against Women has considered the Croatian Periodic Report and commended legislative changes in the field of gender equality. Let me briefly mention some of them.

The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia proclaims gender equality as the highest value of the constitutional order.

I would like to emphasize the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality, as well as the establishment of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality and the Government Office for Gender Equality.

The Law on the Protection from Family Violence was adopted as well as the National Strategy for Protection from Domestic Violence. It was prepared in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations and contains concrete measures with time frame and responsible actors for their implementation.

The Government declared the 22nd of September the National Day of Campaigning Against Violence Against Women.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to underline that the Convention on the Rights of the Child accompanied by two optional protocols, represents a universal standard in the field of the protection of the rights of the child. Recently, my country has presented its periodic Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and we are already working on the implementation of the issued recommendations. I would like to mention that the Public Prosecutor's Office has issued an instruction concerning the protection of the child's privacy based on the mentioned recommendations.

In Croatia, we are particularly concerned about the violence against children and among children. Consequently, we have begun to prepare the draft of the First report concerning the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. My Government has adopted the National program of Activities for the Prevention of Violence among Children as well as the Protocol on Proceedings in Cases of Violence among Children, which states the obligation of all actors regarding the concrete actions.

It is very important to mention that a few years ago, the Ethical Codex for Research with Children, which ensures the protection of interest of the child during any form of research, was adopted in Croatia.

The Ministry for Family concluded the Co-operation Agreement on Implementation of the Activities for Prevention of Violence Amongst Children with the UNICEF. The goal is to provide a safe and stimulating environment for children in primary and secondary schools and to raise public awareness concerning the issue of child violence. This is one of the examples of mutual co-operation between the Government and UNICEF in the Republic of Croatia. The Republic of Croatia strongly supports UNICEF and its efforts to promote and protect the children's rights.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to use this opportunity to support development of the new international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. They have the right to and can take active part in the creation of the community, its social and cultural policies. By the beginning of the year 2003, the National Strategy of Coherent Policy

for the Disabled was adopted and the Law on Ombudsperson for persons with disabilities is being prepared.

The new approach of the Croatian Government to national minorities that are considered as essential part of Croatian society and protected in accordance with the key international standards and national laws, such as the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities, provides meaningful framework for their inclusion in decision-making process.

Croatia shares concerns about vulnerable groups worldwide. In line with this, Croatia has adopted the National Program for Roma in order to improve their living conditions, create equal opportunities, and to facilitate their integration into the society. Also, Croatia joined the „Decade of Roma Inclusion“, and will adopt the new Action Plan for its implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and core UN treaties in the field of human rights have demonstrated a great ability to unite peoples of the world. Today we must focus on their accelerated and full implementation.

Thank you.