

Conference Proceedings:

CROSSING BORDERS TO PROTECT THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

19 FEBRUARY 2009 ♦ CAIRO, EGYPT



International Centre
FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Conference Proceedings:
Crossing Borders to Protect the Children of the World

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Keynote Address: Her Excellency Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak	Page 1
Crossing Borders to Protect the Children of the World: An Introduction by Chairman Daniel Cardon	Page 5
From Paris to Cairo: A Report by President and Chief Executive Officer Ernie Allen	Page 6
The Cairo Declaration	Page 10
Conference Program	Page 12
Remarks by Honorary Board Members	Page 13
Presentations	Page 16
<i>Coming Together to Make the Internet a Safer Place for Children</i>	Page 16
<i>Effective Legislation as Part of the Arsenal in the Fight Against Child Pornography</i>	Page 16
<i>Protecting Children When International Families Break Apart: Cooperation, Mediation, and Respect Between Legal Systems</i>	Page 17
Honorary Board Members of the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children	Page 18
Board of Directors of the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children	Page 19

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: HER EXCELLENCY MRS. SUZANNE MUBARAK



H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak

Your Majesty, Royal Highnesses, Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all in Cairo for this international seminar – focused on the global challenge of missing and sexually exploited children.

Along with my fellow members of the ICMEC Honorary Board, I felt it was essential to use this opportunity presented by our meeting this morning to create a space for dynamic interchange between multiple stakeholders, in an effort to enhance our collective ability to address this topic of mutual concern.

And, I am delighted that ICMEC has organized this landmark event in partnership with our Women's International Peace Movement, for both entities share a deep sense of commitment to:

- ❖ Building safer and more secure societies.
- ❖ Ensuring the rights of all people, all children, to a life of dignity, opportunity, and choice.
- ❖ Inspiring, empowering, and uniting those with the will to defend and the courage to uphold justice, equality, and the rule of law.

On behalf of our two associations, I would like to extend my appreciation to our distinguished guests and experts for answering our call, supporting our cause, and crossing borders to protect the children of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we need to send a clear message: that despite the many socio-economic and political challenges that our nations face, regardless of the time, effort, and resources it will take, the plight of missing and sexually exploited children must remain a priority in our national, regional, and international policies.

Everyday, thousands of young people go missing from their homes. Some return, some never will. Behind many of the statistics are stories so inhumane, so difficult to talk about – of children robbed of their dignity and self-worth – of innocent victims kidnapped, raped, and murdered.

The rapid expansion of ICTs [information and communication technologies] and the evolution of the Internet have served to greatly exacerbate the situation. It has provided new intricate tools and methods for the violation of children's rights. It has fueled the supply and demand for pornography that exploits them, that abuses them both physically and emotionally.

Indeed, what we are dealing with here is an increasingly complex challenge that undermines the progress we have made in all fields of development and threatens both our security and our human values. It is a pervasive phenomenon that requires a coordinated response, spanning all nations and regions.

In this regard, I am pleased that today we are able to highlight the central role of the MENA [Middle East North Africa] region in championing this noble cause. It is very encouraging to see how countries of this region have taken positive steps to address and safeguard children from insecurities of all kinds. And, I am certain that through this meeting we will find more ways of building on these encouraging results.

In Egypt, we are working inclusively with all sectors of our society to comprehensively address this multi-faceted challenge.

In line with the provisions of international legal instruments, we have significantly strengthened our existing Child Law with articles fully criminalizing specific violations against children's rights. Amongst these, we introduced articles recognizing for the first time child pornography as a crime that carries with it serious penalties. It covers pornography in cartoons and on the Internet, and puts a strong emphasis on the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims.

We have also been careful to ensure that our legal efforts take into consideration the gender dimension of the problem, as well as the linkages between child pornography and other forms of child exploitation including child labor, child prostitution, and child trafficking.

Some of these are topics of national priority that we have been addressing for years. Now, we are building on the experience, knowledge, and resources that we have gained to tackle the entire phenomenon of child exploitation more effectively.

Egypt has also focused on raising awareness and educating the broad public about the causes, impact, and prevention of the problem.

I really think this is key, because the most difficult and essential element of any response strategy is to break the walls of silence surrounding the issue at stake. We need to make sure that people fully grasp the extent of the challenge, how it affects the whole spectrum of our societies.

Our Movement's Cyber Peace Initiative, launched in cooperation with various international partners, has been particularly active here in Egypt in terms of raising awareness about these issues.

Through this initiative, I feel that we have been able to launch a serious dialogue with members of our society on both the threats and opportunities presented by the Internet.

- ❖ We have been able to attenuate the fears of many parents, the feeling that they are powerless to protect their children on this vast medium.
- ❖ We have managed to promote the central role that young people themselves can play in making the Internet a safer place, without impeding on their freedom, and their rights to fully benefit from its potential for development.

In turn, the young people and parents we were able to reach were so affected by the mission of our initiative that they created their own Internet safety groups.

Since then, they have been working extremely hard to disseminate our safety tips and guidelines in schools, public libraries, tele-centers, and youth centers. In fact, to date, approximately 150,000 people have received training and attended awareness sessions on Internet safety under the umbrella of the initiative.

And, you will surely hear more about their incredible efforts in the presentation that our team will give in a few minutes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For members of our Movement, our partners, and our youth, it has been so gratifying to see children react positively to our messages, to know they are a little safer, and more able to defend themselves against criminals.

It has also been inspiring to witness the dedication and determination of associations like ICMEC, of parents, educators, and journalists, of all those who are working day and night to make a difference in children's lives.

I can see so many of these phenomenal individuals here today.

Wherever we look, enormous efforts are being made:

- ❖ The Judiciary is striving to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of international law.
- ❖ Law enforcement officers are collaborating to find missing persons and to bring down child pornography rings.
- ❖ NGOs are providing vital support to abused, neglected, and at-risk children.
- ❖ The IT sector continues to break boundaries in innovation, making the Internet a safer place through the development of safety tools, filtering, and rating systems.
- ❖ Members of the private sector are using their business savvy to break the supply and demand of child pornography.

But, still so much more remains to be done.

Child pornography has become a multi-billion dollar industry. How is it possible? How did we come to that?

In the face of this dilemma, I am encouraged to see the progress made through some of ICMEC's initiatives including the Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography, the CyberTipline [of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, ICMEC's sister organization], and the [YouTube] Missing Children's Channel.

These initiatives reflect well the importance of mobilizing various stakeholders, integrating diverse perspectives, and addressing all the dimensions of the problem in order to achieve results.

They emphasize the need for more information regarding child offenders, victims, and those who are most at risk.

There are thousands and thousands of children all over the world that are unaccounted for in our statistics. They are hidden and neglected, vulnerable and excluded.

Children experiencing the violence and despair of wars and armed conflicts, others trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, those who are struggling to survive on the streets, are especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

In a world that has achieved so much, this is not an acceptable situation!

Today, I urge all of you here present to take action against these alarming realities. To ensure that children are no longer used as commodities, as weapons of greed and violence. To help channel more innovation, collaboration, commitment, and compassion into the fight against child exploitation. And, to be part of a process that saves children's lives!

Thank you.

CROSSING BORDERS TO PROTECT THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD: AN INTRODUCTION BY CHAIRMAN DANIEL CARDON

We at the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC) constantly strive to fulfill our mission as the leading global service agency working to protect the world's children from sexual exploitation and abduction. In February 2009, our global movement took a huge step forward when we convened the first meeting of our Honorary Board in the Middle East/North Africa region. Hosted by Her Excellency, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, our Honorary Board gathered in Cairo to address the worldwide problem of missing and sexually exploited children.

Established in 2004, the Honorary Board consists of royalty, first ladies, and prominent women of eight nations. In Cairo, we were delighted to welcome two new Honorary Board members: Her Highness Sheikha Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, wife of His Majesty the King of Bahrain; and Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem of Morocco. These two women share the commitment of their fellow Honorary Board members to the welfare of children around the world, and we welcome the fresh perspectives they bring to ICMEC.

Honorary Board members were joined for the first time in Cairo by ICMEC's Board of Directors. We were also delighted to welcome the Board members of The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement, which co-hosted the event. Many participants traveled great distances to join us, and we are grateful for their dedication and support.

The day's theme, "Crossing Borders to Protect the Children of the World," was a tribute to the Honorary Board for their courage and foresight to legitimize the topic of missing and sexually exploited children as being worthy of discussion, thus creating public dialogue around the issues.

The unifying theme of the meeting and the Cairo Declaration with which it culminated was the vital role each sector of society must play in order to effectively safeguard children from victimization. Speakers addressed the responsibilities of all members of our world community – actors in the spheres of politics, business, education, religion, media, and law enforcement – to protect the most vulnerable members of our societies. Many speakers also highlighted the key role of parents in this global endeavor.

We at ICMEC are deeply grateful to Her Excellency, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, for hosting this historic gathering. We remain in the debt of Director General Nagwa Shoeb and all our colleagues at The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement who so energetically and graciously planned and executed this event. Thanks also go to the speakers who traveled long or short distances to join us in Cairo.

The enthusiasm and commitment of our Honorary Board members and invited guests in Cairo have renewed our belief in our mission and in our organization. We approach the future reinvigorated and confident of our ability to meet the challenges before us. Together, we have accomplished much. Together, we will do even more to protect the world's children.



Nagwa Shoeb, Director General of The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement, and Baron Daniel Cardon de Lichtbuer, ICMEC Chairman.

FROM PARIS TO CAIRO: A REPORT BY PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER ERNIE ALLEN

At the meeting of the ICMEC Honorary Board in Paris two years ago, a meeting that *Le Figaro* called “the G-8 for children,” I reported that there was clear and compelling evidence that children had become a commodity for sale or trade by organized criminals, sexual predators, and others. I noted that national boundaries were no longer barriers to the transportation and victimization of children, and that if we were going to have an impact, we needed a global response.



Ernie Allen, ICMEC President and Chief Executive Officer

I also reported that we lacked the kind of comprehensive, scientific data that we need on a global basis. Through our new Koons Family Institute on International Law and Policy, ICMEC is committed to developing such data so that policy makers will have a better understanding of the true magnitude of these problems.

However, even with the limited data available today, it is clear that there are hundreds of thousands of children who go missing each year, and that we are witnessing an explosion in child sexual exploitation worldwide.

- ❖ Recently, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released its Global Report on Human Trafficking, which reported that 79% of human trafficking is sexual exploitation. The report added that 20% of trafficking victims worldwide are children, but that in some areas like West Africa and the Mekong Delta, nearly 100% of the victims are children.
- ❖ The 2007 State of the World’s Children report estimated that 1.8 million children are involved in commercial sex work. Many are forced into it, whether they are sold into sexual slavery by poor families or abducted and trafficked into brothels or other exploitative environments.
- ❖ A UNICEF report stated that children victimized through sexual exploitation “probably number in the millions each year.” The report adds, “Children as young as fourteen months are bought, sold, and traded...for sexual gratification...and the financial gain of child merchants.”

Clearly, the problems we are addressing remain severe; however, I am proud to report that we have made extraordinary progress since the Paris meeting. Let me briefly highlight three specific examples:

Ending Abuse of Financial and Information Networks for Distribution of Child Pornography

Two years ago, through the creation of the Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography (FCACP), we set a bold, ambitious goal: to eradicate commercial child pornography by 2008. Many said that such a

goal was naïve and unrealistic. It is now 2009 and we have not “eradicated” all commercial child pornography, but we have reduced it dramatically, increased the cost of doing business, and virtually eliminated the use of the credit card for purchasing it.

The FCACP has brought together 31 financial and Internet companies in a coalition to follow the money, stop the payments, and shut down these illegal businesses. It has worked. Two years ago, an analysis by McKinsey Worldwide told us that commercial child pornography was a multi-billion dollar industry. Two months ago, the FBI in the United States told us that this global industry has now shrunk to a multi-million dollar industry. It is still too large but it is far smaller than it was just two years ago.

Another positive sign is that the price of the material has increased significantly. Two years ago, I cited a case in which we identified 70,000 customers purchasing access to graphic images of young children being sexually assaulted. The purchasers paid \$29.95 per month and used their credit cards. Today, similar access costs \$500 and up, and you can no longer use your credit card. Our goal was to increase the risk and eliminate the profit. In just two years, we have made it far more dangerous and far more expensive for these people to do business, and many have shut down. However, others are continuing, and they are finding new ways to collect the money. In addition, as the commercial child pornography industry has shrunk, non-commercial child pornography has increased. Today, unlike two years ago, most people who access child pornography are not purchasing it for money; they are trading images with others on the Internet, using online resources such as peer-to-peer networks.

We are also seeing another effect of this crackdown. The remaining commercial child pornography sites are expanding into other kinds of criminal activity. For example, many sites still display credit card logos, but when you provide your credit card information and attempt to purchase child pornography, the operator steals your identity and uses your personal information for other criminal purposes. In addition, these operators are also using these sites to distribute computer viruses and other malicious, illegal content.

The battle continues. Thanks to Missing Children Europe and President Barroso, the European Commission is about to create its own Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography, and we are working closely with Asian bankers to create a similar coalition based in Singapore. When this Board meets in two years, I am optimistic that I will be able to report to you that commercial child pornography has been eradicated from the face of the Earth.

Law Enforcement Training

I reported in Paris that law enforcement in most countries lacked the knowledge, expertise, and resources to investigate Internet-based crimes committed against children. I am proud to report that thanks to the support of Microsoft, we have now trained 3,221 law enforcement officials from 113 countries in the investigation of computer-facilitated crimes against children. Thus, today we have built a worldwide network of expert investigators, identifying more offenders and rescuing more children.

Stronger Legislation

In 2006, ICMEC released its review of child pornography laws in the 187 member countries of Interpol. We found that most countries had no law at all, and that only five, including France and Belgium, had enacted law in all categories we recommended. Fewer than 30 countries had what we felt to be adequate

law. ICMEC developed model legislation, and reached out to international organizations, members of parliaments and leaders around the world to promote enactment. We continue to do so. Since the Paris meeting:

- ❖ Argentina enacted new law on computer-facilitated offenses;
- ❖ Brazil, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, and Portugal all criminalized the possession of child pornography;
- ❖ India criminalized possession and computer-facilitated offenses. India had never had child pornography legislation before 2008;
- ❖ The Dominican Republic and Hungary strengthened their law;
- ❖ And I particularly want to thank and recognize Egypt. Egypt enacted new child pornography legislation that was signed into law on 15 June 2008. This important legislation criminalizes the possession of child pornography and outlaws computer-facilitated offenses.

While the actions of those nine countries are encouraging and inspiring, there are still 93 countries that have no legislation, and 129 countries that still do not make the possession of child pornography a crime.

So, while my progress report is positive and hopeful, it is clear that we have much work left to do. Since the Paris meeting, we have taken important steps to save children's lives and disrupt those who seek to victimize them. Yet, the fundamental premises discussed in Paris remain true today. The problem of missing, abducted, trafficked, and sexually exploited children is large, growing, under-recognized and under-reported. Now more than ever, we must challenge the world to act.

What remains to be done?

1. We must build greater capacity to protect children in every country.

We need more national centers, more regional centers, more specialized police units, and more regional and global cooperation.

2. We must attack a unique, modern phenomenon – the use of the Internet to exploit and victimize children.

We need more efforts like Mrs. Mubarak's Cyber Peace Initiative and Safer Internet Day. The Internet is a positive resource. Yet, there is a dark side. The Internet has changed the way many children are exploited. For example, we are identifying sexual traffickers who market and promote children for sex via the Internet. They do not parade children on city streets any more, they market them online.

We must reach out to parents and children around the world, and give them the tools and knowledge they need to utilize the Internet for good, while recognizing and avoiding the risks.

3. We must engage technology leaders worldwide. While technology has contributed to many of these problems, technology also offers us the most promising solutions.

4. We must recognize that protecting the world's children cannot be left solely to governments.

We must build partnerships, and mobilize every resource. In Paris we discussed the success of the Amber Alert in France, Greece, the United States and other countries. Through simply using the media to provide breaking information in serious child abduction cases, we are mobilizing the eyes and ears of the public, and saving lives. Private sector leaders can help us develop and deploy similar innovative techniques to save the world's children.

5. We must continue our battle to change laws around the world. We are making progress in many areas. Yet, we face a fundamental reality. While child sexual exploitation and child pornography are clear violations of human rights, if we are ever to eradicate them, they must also be violations of the law. They must be crimes in every country.
6. We must continue our work with organizations like the Hague Conference on Private International Law and its Permanent Bureau to promote good practices with respect to international child abduction, ensuring that all possible steps are taken to secure the rights of children to maintain personal relationships and have regular contact with both of their parents, even when the parents live in different countries.

In conclusion, we are encouraged by our progress since the Paris meeting. Yet, it is clear that we must do more. I look forward with confidence to providing an exciting progress report at the next meeting of our Honorary Board.

THE CAIRO DECLARATION

19 February 2009

Each child has the right to be protected from any form of violence, abuse or neglect and to enjoy all rights without any discrimination. The members of the Honorary Board of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children have gathered in Cairo at the invitation of Her Excellency Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak to reaffirm their personal commitment to the protection of children, who are the most vulnerable members of society.

Members of the Honorary Board have come together with a common vision and mission: “Crossing Borders to Protect the Children of the World.” Recognizing their unique abilities to influence opinions and actions in their home countries and regions, the Honorary Board members have accepted as their mission the aim of building bridges between countries, regions and cultures with a common goal of protecting the world’s children from all forms of victimization and exploitation. The Honorary Board recognizes that effective protection of children requires the active participation of all members of society, and pledges to spread consciousness of this shared responsibility.

Governments are key actors in ensuring the welfare of the world’s children. It is their role to promulgate and take active measures to enforce laws with a view to preventing exploitation of children in all its forms. Effective legislation and law enforcement deny predators the environment in which they can easily target and victimize children. Emerging technologies and information networks require that legislation is kept abreast of such technologies and developments in order to counter newly developing threats.

Yet, as vital as government action is, the vigilance and activism of individual citizens and civil societies is equally important. Concerned citizens set the tone for the society in which they live, and can send a powerful message that exploitation of children will not be tolerated. Civil societies can play a significant role in educating all members of the community about their shared responsibilities.

The business community, too, must shoulder its share of responsibility. The companies which develop and market new technologies must be responsible for preventing abuse of financial and information networks. Corporate responsibility demands that commercial innovations do not contribute to facilitating exploitation of children.

The Honorary Board simultaneously calls upon those who touch the lives of children every day – parents, educators, healthcare professionals, social workers, media professionals, religious leaders and others - to be fully informed about emerging threats to children. These individuals are often the first to notice early signs of abuse, violence or exploitation, whether by observing a child’s actions or listening carefully to his or her statements. They share an obligation to provide protection to children from any form of violence, abuse or neglect. Early intervention can stop abuse before it happens. Parents are the first line of defense for any child. They must monitor their children’s activities and friends, and remain constantly aware of their children’s use of the Internet.

Family disputes can have a devastating impact on children. Parents have the responsibility to shield their children from the negative effects of family discord. Children must not be used as proxies for battles

between parents, and both mothers and fathers should seek to mediate peacefully disagreements about their children's futures.

Finally, the Honorary Board asks all children of the world to assume responsibility for protecting other children, especially those younger or more vulnerable. To remain silent in the face of evil is not a virtue, and young people must come forward when they become aware of possible exploitation of others.

The struggle to protect children is a universal one. It is a duty that falls to each one of us without any exception. As members of the Honorary Board of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, on the occasion of this meeting in Cairo, we call upon people of the world to join us in recommitting ourselves to the protection of children who are the future of our shared world - the protection of those who cannot protect themselves.

Recommendations for Action

- 1. The ICMEC Honorary Board urges global leaders to take immediate steps to:**
 - a- enact new improved legislation and review existing laws periodically to ensure effective redress of any form of exploitation of children.**
 - b- join with ICMEC in a global movement to protect children, including expanding efforts to build new national and regional centers around the world to better address the problems of child abduction and exploitation.**
 - c- explore bilateral and multilateral approaches to resolving family disputes, including mediation, in order to ensure that the children are not the victims.**
- 2. The ICMEC Honorary Board urges global leaders and leading global organizations to:**
 - a- make the eradication of child exploitation a top priority.**
 - b- join together in a global campaign to build greater awareness and to stimulate concerted action to protect the world's children.**
- 3. The ICMEC Honorary Board urges technology leaders to develop new tools and technologies to protect children and to redouble efforts to ensure that technology is not used as a tool to exploit and victimize children.**

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Welcome Note and Introduction

Ernie Allen, Moderator

President and Chief Executive Officer, ICMEC

Keynote Address

H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak

First Lady of Egypt and Member of the ICMEC Honorary Board

The International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children: A Global Movement

Baron Daniel Cardon de Lichtbuer

Chairman of the Board, ICMEC

Remarks by Members of the ICMEC Honorary Board

Coming Together to Make the Internet a Safer Place for Children

Presentation of Cyber Peace Initiative Video on Internet Safety

Nevine M. Tewfik

CyberPeace Initiative, The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement

Timothy Cranton

Associate General Counsel for Worldwide Internet Safety Enforcement Programs, Microsoft Corporation

Effective Legislation as Part of the Arsenal in the Fight Against Child Pornography

Nancy Dube

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, ICMEC

Ambassador Moushira Khattab

Secretary General, National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, Egypt

Protecting Children When International Families Break Apart: Cooperation, Mediation and Respect Between Legal Systems

William Duncan

Deputy Secretary General, Hague Conference on Private International Law

Justice Adel Omar Sherif

Deputy Chief Justice, Supreme Constitutional Court, Egypt

Closing Remarks

Ernie Allen

Cairo Declaration

H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak

REMARKS BY HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS

ICMEC is privileged and honored by the presence of the ten committed and prominent women on its Honorary Board. The influence and good offices of these Honorary Board members lend ICMEC a depth and scope which would not otherwise be possible.

Our meeting in Cairo was hosted by Her Excellency, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, who enthusiastically committed herself to the project at our 2007 meeting in Paris. Mrs. Mubarak was joined in Cairo by six of her Honorary Board colleagues, each of whom brought with her a personal message of dedication to the protection of the world's children. ICMEC was privileged to welcome to Cairo: Her Majesty Queen Paola, Queen of the Belgians; Her Highness Sheikha Sabeeka of Bahrain; Mrs. Bernadette Chirac; Mrs. Margarida Barroso; Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem of Morocco; and The Honorable Valentina Matvienko, Governor of St. Petersburg, Russia.



From left to right: Baron Daniel Cardon de Lichtbuer, ICMEC Chairman; The Honorable Valentina Matvienko; Mrs. Margarida Barroso; Her Majesty Queen Paola; H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak; Her Highness Sheikha Sabeeka; Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem; Mrs. Bernadette Chirac; and Ernie Allen, ICMEC President and Chief Executive Officer.

Mrs. Mubarak set the tone for the day when, in welcoming the Honorary Board, she asserted,

Today's meeting presents us with the opportunity to help re-focus the world's attention on the plight of missing and sexually exploited children. Each day, thousands of young people go missing from their homes. Some return, some never will. We hear heart-breaking stories – children kidnapped, beaten, raped, and murdered. We watch parents in absolute agony, helplessly searching for a sign that their child is out there... In response to this, we need to launch a strong call for action, for greater international cooperation, in addressing this global phenomenon. We need to send a firm message to the offenders of these heinous crimes that we shall stop at nothing to save our children.

The women of the Honorary Board continued and amplified the theme of "Crossing Borders to Protect the Children of the World" throughout the day's meetings. Mrs. Bernadette Chirac, who hosted our 2007 Paris meeting, spoke of the immediate dangers to children who are criminally abducted, noting, "It is thus imperative that everything possible is done in the very first hours after the abduction occurs so that the child is found and extracted from the hands of the kidnapper. For this reason, since February 2006, France has had in place the 'Kidnapping Alert,' a mechanism of public appeal. The mechanism is inspired by the 'Amber Alert' in the United States. The principle is that, in a limited number of cases involving the

disappearances of minors, the judicial authorities can decide to launch a call for public cooperation by having recourse to a large range of means of communication: radio, television, news agencies, billboards on motorways, in train and subway stations, and in victim-assistance associations.” Mrs. Chirac praised movement in the European Union toward increased cross-border cooperation to extend the range and effectiveness of kidnapping alerts, concluding, “This type of cooperation ultimately creates a movement of solidarity between our populations for the safety of our children.”

Queen Paola, Queen of the Belgians, addressed the plight of children who are the victims of international parental kidnapping, deprived of the basic right of the child to maintain contact with both parents. She discussed bilateral and multilateral agreements designed to address international parental kidnapping, but acknowledged, that “The law has its limits especially vis-à-vis the emotional, socio-cultural, and sometimes religious aspects of these cases. It is here that national centers can be useful, in joining with the authorities, by supplementing the legal components with other components, like international family mediation between parents, or the prevention and information for at-risk groups. An out-of-court settlement between the parents is always better than the best court determination. Each intervention that promotes dialogue or mediation is preferable to a court proceeding.” Queen Paola cited Belgium’s conclusion of bilateral agreements on parental abduction with Tunisia and Morocco and its cooperative



From left to right: Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem; Mrs. Bernadette Chirac; and Her Majesty Queen Paola.

agreement with Child Focus as examples of the Belgian government’s steps to create concrete solutions to difficult problems.

Princess Lalla Meryem of Morocco outlined relevant aspects of the National Action Plan on Childhood launched by Morocco’s National Observatory on the Rights of the Child. Citing its educational campaign to heighten awareness on Internet dangers, she commented, “In a world that has been made borderless and more penetrable by the Internet, it has become incumbent on us to seriously

combat the misuse of the Internet and the sexual exploitation of children through this medium.” She asserted that many sectors of society – families, civil societies, Internet service providers and public authorities – must cooperate to protect children.

Governor Valentina Matvienko of St. Petersburg, said, “Today it is impossible to accept that child exploitation, including sexual exploitation, a horrible evil, exists in the 21st century, an era of technical progress. No technical achievements can compensate for a lack of goodwill and mercy. Only through our combined efforts can we prevent this evil.” Speaking of crimes against children, Governor Matvienko proclaimed, “The penalties for such crimes must be inevitable and harsh in all countries. Together, we should develop recommendations on how to construct tough barriers against child pornography. It is known that in Europe more than 200 publications containing child pornography are being published.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are being made from this. It seems to me that the international bodies of financial control should cut off such illegal financial streams and stop such activity.”

Mrs. Margarida Barroso described steps the European Commission has taken in recent years to protect vulnerable children from exploitation and abuse. She listed the European Union’s actions on multiple fronts, including the institution of Child Alert systems for missing children; the creation of a single European telephone number dedicated to receiving reports of missing children; the development of cross-border family law; measures for child cyber safety, and model legislation against child pornography. Mrs. Barroso also emphasized the key role of parents in the digital age, noting that parental wisdom and experience is needed to guide the technical expertise of children.



From left to right: Her Highness Sheikha Sabeeka; Mrs. Margarida Barroso; and The Honorable Valentina Matvienko.

Sheikha Sabeeka of Bahrain, attending her first Honorary Board meeting, spoke in private session to her new colleagues on the centers that have been established in Bahrain by the government and by nongovernmental organizations to protect abused children. She discussed the need for effective law enforcement training on child protection issues and the imperative to offer abused children a safe haven while appropriate authorities pursue their cases. Sheikha Sabeeka graciously acknowledged the experience of her fellow Honorary Board members and pledged to draw on their expertise and wisdom as she continues her commitment to protect the children of Bahrain from exploitation.

PRESENTATIONS

Coming Together to Make the Internet a Safer Place for Children

Nevine Tewfik, a leading member of the Cyber Peace Initiative of The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement, outlined the Initiative's mission to involve, inspire, and instruct Egyptian youth on effective and safe use of the Internet. Through education and outreach, the Cyber Peace Initiative empowers young people of all backgrounds to master the resources offered on the World Wide Web. Equally important, the initiative works to create a "Culture of Safety." Ms. Tewfik explained, "We have worked on safety content development and reached out to learn from the best practices of similar international organizations with the aim of making the Internet a safer place for children and society at large." The Initiative is expanding its focus as it reaches out to other Arab states.

Ahmed Rashad, co-leader of the *Net-Aman* team of The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement, described the goals of his team of "Internet social activists" who work with Egypt's schools, libraries, NGOs, and tele-centers to create a safer digital environment for youth. He shared a brief video regarding the activities of *Net-Aman*.

Timothy Cranton, Associate General Counsel for Worldwide Internet Safety Enforcement Programs at Microsoft Corporation and ICMEC Board member, shared with the audience a Public Service Announcement produced by Microsoft, focusing on the dangers to children posed by unsupervised Internet access and the need for parents to supervise and educate their sons and daughters. Mr. Cranton said, "The message of this announcement is clear. We need to address this issue head on, talk to children, and educate them about smart online usage. The conversation is critical. Just as we all teach our children how to be safe offline, in the everyday world, we also need to develop guidelines and teachings for the Internet to help children take advantage of the wonders of technology safely."

Effective Legislation as Part of the Arsenal in the Fight Against Child Pornography

Nancy Dube, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of ICMEC, declared, "One of the greatest challenges we confront as champions of child safety, child protection, and children's rights globally, is the fact that few of the world's nearly 200 countries have any kind of meaningful system in place to adequately and effectively combat the sexual exploitation of children, especially through child pornography." She outlined ICMEC's model child pornography legislation, launched in 2006, to assist governments around the world to pass and enforce effective legislation against child pornography. ICMEC has developed a set of five criteria crucial to effective child pornography legislation and offers this model legislation template to activists worldwide. ICMEC regularly reviews worldwide progress on child pornography legislation, and Ms. Dube hailed recent steps forward in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, India, Moldova, Portugal, the Dominican Republic, Hungary, and Japan. She lauded Egypt's 2008 legislation specifically criminalizing child pornography offenses, concluding, "No country is immune from this form of child sexual exploitation, and it will take concerted effort from governments, law enforcement, and civil society to ensure that the world's children are protected."

Ambassador Moushira Khattab, Secretary General for the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, discussed Egypt's recently enacted Child Law. She outlined key provisions of the far-reaching legislation, including cross-cutting protections from violence and exploitation. The law

specifically criminalizes use of computers and the Internet for purposes of child prostitution or child pornography, and establishes a decentralized child protection system to support children at the local level. Ambassador Khattab concluded with the caution, “The adoption of this legal reform is only the beginning of even harder work. It needs to be supported by consistent advocacy to create awareness about its provisions, enforcement and monitoring mechanisms, to be complemented by an educational reform, appropriate financial resources, and coordinated efforts of entities working for and with children... In a globalizing world, there must be, as well, a complementary collaboration of legislation across borders.”

Protecting Children When International Families Break Apart: Cooperation, Mediation, and Respect Between Legal Systems

Professor William Duncan, Deputy Secretary General of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, addressed the “devastating” impact on children of the separation of their parents. He noted that parents bear primary responsibility for minimizing the impact of the separation on their child and for cooperating on a resolution that allows the child the full benefit of contact with both parents. When parents of cross-frontier families fail to achieve cooperation, however, the problem often shifts to the respective governments and courts of the battling parents. Professor Duncan described the ongoing work of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (Hague Conference) to promote respect and cooperation among differing legal systems, citing the four global Conventions the Hague Conference has developed in the area of child protection. Recognizing that the Conventions have not proven attractive to many states based on or influenced by Sharia law, Professor Duncan described the Malta Process as a continuing dialogue among experts on improving legal cooperation among states. He said, “The Malta process has been an important eye-opening experience for all those involved. The dialogue has proceeded on the basis of a shared set of values and objectives – equal respect for the different legal systems, a willingness to explore and consider new solutions, and the need to find solutions through a process of consensus. Underlying all of this has been the shared value which we all place on our children’s welfare and the common understanding...that children have the right to continuing contact with both parents.” He concluded, “We need to continue to work to break down barriers of ignorance and mistrust. Our children and their parents deserve no less.”

Justice Adel Omar Sherif, Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt, cited Egypt’s leading role in the Arab world in the legal and judicial domains. He outlined the many steps, beginning with the 1988 Presidential Decree creating the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and continuing through the 2008 enactment of the Child Law, that Egypt has taken to protect its children. He listed six relevant bilateral agreements which Egypt has concluded with other countries, but called on Egypt and other countries in the region to have the political will to accede to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and the 1996 Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement, and Cooperation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children. Justice Sherif said, “It is a shame that there has always been a claim that there is a contradiction between Islamic Sharia on the one hand and the principles laid down in these Conventions on the other hand. I believe many studies have been undertaken in the past 20 years and all of them have proven that this contradiction does not exist.” He also lauded the Malta Process, describing it as, “a possible avenue to...arrive at a conclusion based on our common values and traditions, without breaching our religious commitments.” Justice Sherif called for increased opportunities for judicial training, communication and cooperation across borders, and the establishment of dedicated family/children’s courts in countries where they do not yet exist.

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