

**Resolution of
INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON SOCIAL ACTION
“CHILDREN’S RIGHTS PROTECTION
DURING OCCUPATION AND MILITARY CONFLICTS”**

June 1, 2019

Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University with support of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy of Poland, Polish-Ukrainian “Forum of partnership” under the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Poland and Ukraine as well as Espresso.TV held the **International Forum on Social Action “Children’s rights protection during occupation and military conflicts”** (hereinafter - the Forum) on **June 01, 2019**, in Vinnytsia.

More than 150 people participated in the Forum, including representatives of local authorities, administration and students of the University, media representatives, media organizations, academic community, public organizations and experts from Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Poland, Lithuania and Romania.

Within the framework of the International Forum on Social Action “Children’s rights protection during occupation and military conflicts”, participants discussed the topical issues of life of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their stay in the temporarily occupied territories and areas of armed conflicts, namely:

- 1) Right to education
- 2) Informational dimension of occupation and armed conflicts: how to protect children?
- 3) Protection of children’s rights in the occupied territories: international experience and Ukrainian realities
- 4) Post-conflict management: experience for Ukraine

The participants of the Forum focused on the urgency of protecting these children's rights for Ukraine as a result of Russian military aggression and occupation by the Russian Federation of Ukrainian territories – Crimea and parts of Donbass.

The Russian-Ukrainian war, which lasts for the fifth consecutive year on the territory of Ukraine, should become one of the most relevant vectors of present international discourse as a set of facts of violation of the state borders of Ukraine and the integrity of its territories, invasion of cases of border national sovereignty, the introduction of regimes in uncontrolled territories of Ukraine, which violates the rights of children and adult citizens of Ukraine.

The participants of the Forum discussed the topical problems of the enforcement of children’s right to education in conditions of occupation and armed conflicts.

Particular attention was paid to the functioning of educational institutions, relocated from armed conflicts zones, special opportunities and needs of such educational institutions in the implementation of state educational policy and national-patriotic educational activities, international experience of relocation, successful cases, practices and models of social integration of children as well as IDPs with local communities through participation in a wide range of initiatives.

Participants of the Forum note that occupation and armed conflicts primarily affect civilians and, above all, children. Even under the condition that children move from zones of conflict or occupation and get the status of IDPs, additional problems remain in terms of granting such children the right to education as it is given to the rest of the population. To ensure the enforcement of the IDPs’ rights to education is crucial for the development of children, teenagers, youth and their opportunities in the future. Equal access to education is an important indicator of the integration of IDPs into host territorial communities.

In Ukrainian legislation, the right of IDPs to education is defined in Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine “On Ensuring Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons” as follows: “The registered internally displaced person has the right to continue his/her education at a certain educational level in other regions of Ukraine at the expense of the state budget or other sources of funding”.

In addition, the participants of the Forum note that the identified problematic issues concern children’s psychological traumas as well as level of their adaptation to the new conditions of their studying. It has been found out that the conflicts among IDPs’ secondary school children and their age mates, arise on the ground of hypersensitivity of IDPs’ children to negativity, apart from common reasons.

The problem of exercising the IDPs’ right to education has not bypassed higher education institutions. Among the problems is the impossibility to obtain original documents from the previous place of study, absence of certified copies of academic record books and originals of personal data files, difficulties with transferring of previously gained credits, etc.

There are problems of integration of IDPs’ children to local communities and, accordingly, their integration into educational processes. Moreover, while formal education of such children can still be regulated by administrative means, informal and extracurricular education of many children faces numerous difficulties due to the complexity of the displaced population integration. An important role in solving the problems of the integration of IDPs’ children into local communities and, consequently, to local processes of informal education must be attributed to displaced educational institutions.

The relocated educational institutions can serve not only as points of attraction for IDPs, but also as universal means of integrating IDPs into local communities, as shown in the case of the Vasyl` Stus Donetsk National University. With this in mind, it is obvious that the state support is needed for the rooting of

displaced educational institutions in their places of stay, as well as every possible support is important for formal and informal education carried out by the relocated educational institutions, both at the state and local level.

Concerning about *the enforcement of the IDPs’ right to education*, the participants of the International Forum on Social Action offer and recommend the following:

1. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, in accordance with the “Strategy for the Integration of Internally Displaced Persons and Implementation of Long-Term Solutions to Internal Displacement until 2020”, to create conditions for the support of higher education institutions relocated from the temporarily occupied territory or from the territories on which the state authorities temporarily do not exercise their powers, to initiate the development of national and regional programs of support for displaced universities as educational centres, centres of identity of local communities, hence centers for the integration of children and adult IDPs into local communities.

2. The Council of Rectors of Displaced Higher Education Institutions to submit proposals to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine to improve the activities of higher education institutions, temporarily relocated from the area of the antiterrorist operation, and to organize the International Congress of Displaced Universities on the basis of which to create international lawyers’ associations in order to protect the rights of the displaced institutions and IDPs. Also, submit proposals to create consulting centers on the basis of several displaced Higher Education Institutions in cooperation with the Open Policy Foundation, which has the necessary experience, to accompany major projects of comprehensive support for the implementation of the right to education in Ukraine for children in the occupied territory.

3. According to the “Strategy for the Integration of Internally Displaced Persons and Implementation of Long-Term Solutions to Internal Displacement until 2020”, the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Ukraine to develop systems for psychological and social assistance while solving common issues of host territorial communities and IDPs and to create centres for adaptation of IDPs’ children and young people on the basis of regional youth centres. Given the great influence that parents have on children, the organization of various activities involving the participation of not only children but also parents (in the format of stationary and out-of-home family festivals, "mobile communities", activities of family leisure and sports, etc.) in the tasks of such centers should to be envisaged.

4. The Ministry of Education and Science to approve the developed national programs of civic education as well as education of children and young people, taking into account new challenges of our country.

5. Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine to find ways to continue the implementation of the hotline for graduates and students from uncontrolled territories, territories along the "line of separation" created within the framework of the Open Policy Foundation project supported by UNICEF.

Regarding the *topical problems of informational and psychological impact on children* staying under occupation and in armed conflicts, the participants of the Forum appoint the following:

1. To ensure the implementation of the “Strategy of Information Reintegration of Certain Territories in the East of Ukraine, on which the state authorities temporarily do not exercise their powers, and territories adjacent to the area of the antiterrorist operation” and “Strategy of Information Reintegration of Crimea”, the Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine shall coordinate the information sphere between state authorities involved in the formation and implementation of state policy regarding Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts with representatives of academic community (temporarily displaced HEIs), mass media, public organizations, experts working in a controlled area and having relationships/contacts/origins from the occupied territories. This should be done to develop and implement information policy, taking into account their experience and understanding the specifics of these territories.

2. The representatives of the academic community, analytical centres and media organizations shall promote the implementation of informational and analytical activities of the Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine and other bodies of state power and local self-government bodies that are responsible for the implementation of information policy concerning the occupied territories.

3. To reduce the negative informational and psychological impact from the Russian Federation and the organs of management of the occupied territories controlled by it; to increase the effectiveness of national information policy (including through the media), the Ministry of Information Policy together with the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine shall focus on increasing the share and quality of specialized content for Ukrainian citizens living in the controlled territory of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, namely:

- production and promotion of Ukrainian-language content that can be interesting and useful to children, their parents and young people in the occupied territories and conflict zones;

- creation of Russian-language content aimed at the deconstruction of Russian messages (historical programs, reflection of the real situation in Russia, demonstration of the technical superiority of “Western civilization”, Ukraine's place in it).

4. To form a single internal information field on the perception of children and young people living in the occupied territories and in the areas of armed conflicts, the public and media organizations as well as experts working in the field of media education shall focus on launching informational and educational campaigns for journalists and individuals, who form the information agenda (bloggers, opinion leaders, etc.). This is to reduce the number of destructive narratives, “cliches”, etc., which form the negative perception of children and young people living in the territories of occupation and conflict areas.

5. To systematically observe journalistic professional standards and ethical standards in covering issues related to children in various aspects (the child as an object of portrayal and the child as a subject, a source of information), for journalists to consider the priority of the rights of the child to be the main rule of their work with children. To recommend the journalists not to use the subject and the image of children for sensational attention attraction or shocking content; to take care of privacy and the right to anonymity of the character or the child-source; to take care of the physical and emotional well-being of the child; not to make threats to the life or health of children; to care about the consequences of journalistic materials, preventing the psychological trauma of children through the media, to prevent both primary and secondary media trauma.

6. For the formation and implementation of information policy concerning the occupied territories, the Monitoring and Analytical Coordination Center on the basis of the Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine on the development and implementation of state information policy regarding Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts shall conduct research and develop specific proposals for state authorities and local self-government bodies concerning similar situations and practices to solve the problem of informational and psychological impact on children and their parents.

7. To involve civil society institutions into the development and implementation of the above-mentioned Strategies by introducing systematic meetings of representatives of public authorities and local self-government bodies, academic and media community, experts and other stakeholders in order to identify the current situation and develop recommendations, to implement joint projects aimed at reduction of negative informational and psychological influence on children and their parents, who are of interest to Ukraine, both in external and internal information space.

8. To ensure the implementation of the Doctrine of Ukraine's Information Security, “Strategy of Information Reintegration of Certain Territories in the East of Ukraine, on which the state authorities temporarily do not exercise their powers, and territories adjacent to the area of the antiterrorist operation” and “Strategy of Information Reintegration of Crimea”, to the state authorities and local self-government, the academic community, mass media, civil society institutions and

other interested parties, which are responsible for the implementation of the information policy, to promote support to the issues of occupation and military aggression by Russian Federation, the situation in the combat zone and the occupied Crimean peninsula in the information and media space in order to maintain the interest of the internal and external public.

The participants of the Forum declare their readiness for active and systematic cooperation to reduce the negative informational and psychological influence as well as for a further informational reintegration of children and their parents in the occupied territories and the conflict zone.

We call on all stakeholders (public authorities and local self-government, public and media organizations, academic and media community, etc.) to engage to a constructive dialogue, to form a single information space, to provide children and their parents with access to true, unbiased information about the situation and opportunities in Ukraine.

In order to increase the effectiveness of *children’s rights protection in the occupied territories* the participants of the Forum recommend the following:

1. To the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons, to presidential envoy on children’s rights as well as human rights commissioner of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to develop an effective programme with specifically determined ways and guarantees regarding children’s rights protection in occupied territories.

2. Ensure the formation of a single record of statistical data on the violation of children's rights in armed conflicts, involving representatives of relevant ministries, non-governmental organizations and the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission.

3. To coordinate the efforts of public authorities, local governments, international non-governmental organizations and public organizations while developing forms, means and methods of protecting the rights of children during armed conflicts considering international experience.

4. To strengthen control over the enforcement and protection of the children’s rights during armed conflicts by improving the forms and order of it’s maintaining.

5. To involve civil society, state and non-state institutions in expanding the sphere of social responsibility in terms of children’s rights protection during armed conflicts.

In order to increase the effectiveness of management decisions and actions that will need to be implemented immediately after the end of the conflict, the following is proposed for *setting up a future post-conflict management process*:

1. The Ministry for Temporary Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons in order to determine the priority actions on the temporarily

occupied territories after their release from occupation, to instruct sectoral ministries according to their directions develop an audit program for a post-conflict area, which will include the analysis and evaluation of demographic, social, economic, educational and other conditions, which will exist in the post-conflict area after the occupation, to develop program for the development of such territory, based on the existing context of the conditions ending the conflict;

2. To the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons, other specialized bodies responsible for the implementation of state policy in the field of education and employment – to develop a common position on the recognition of educational documents and labor experience documents issued in the temporarily occupied territories, their legalization within the limits of the Ukrainian legislation, taking also into account "Namibia exceptions";

2. Facilitate the repatriation of educational institutions, including through the support of the HEIs in “emigration” for their further lives and effective work. After the conflict has ended, to restore the work of such HEIs in the post-conflict areas by supporting them with resources from the state and local budgets;

3. To determine the role of teachers, lecturers and administrations of educational institutions in fueling the conflict situation in the East of Ukraine (including by means of sociological research) and consider the expediency and the possibility of providing a legal definition of such activity of an educator;

4. Ministry of Education and Science – to develop specific educational programs aimed at overcoming the consequences of traumatism, as well as a combination of national patriotic and conciliatory narratives; to pay special attention to the using of the Ukrainian language and teaching of historical subjects (especially modern history), taking into account the world experience of restricting the teaching of history in post-conflict areas;

5. To coordinate the efforts of public authorities, local authorities and international technical assistance projects in developing long-term projects aimed at restoring social services and infrastructure (including educational and youth-related ones) in post-conflict areas. Such programs should take into account the local context, rather than copy the standard post-conflict management models proposed by international practice;

6. To the local authorities and local self-government bodies, in cooperation with sectoral civil society institutions, should immediately, after the end of the conflict, analyze the labor market, focusing, among others, on workplaces for youth, start up small and medium business to meet the individual needs of the population in post-conflict growth, to prevent the stagnation of the post-conflict area and further sustainable development of such territory;

7. To civil society and higher education institutions to ensure the creation and/or implementation of qualitative analytical work, which will support the

adaptation of specific programs on the postconflict territory, which will take into account the local context.

Organizers and participants of the International Forum on Social Action “Children’s rights protection during occupation and military conflicts” June 1, 2019

Vinnytsia

The resolution of the International Forum on Social Action “Children’s rights protection during occupation and military conflicts” will be sent to:

- The President of Ukraine
- The Prime Minister of Ukraine
- Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
- Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine
- Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine
- Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine
- Ministry of Culture of Ukraine
- Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced

Persons of Ukraine

- Commissioner of the President of Ukraine for children’s rights
- Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights
- Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
- Donetsk Law Institute of MIA of Ukraine
- UNICEF Ukraine
- OSCE SMM
- Coalition " Children’s rights in Ukraine" (18 Ukrainian and international organizations)
- Council of rectors of displaced HEI
- Educational Cluster in Ukraine
- Child Protection Cluster in Ukraine
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine