

Dear Chair,

Dear Mr. Lewis,

Dear speakers and dear colleagues,

I have the honour of opening the first roundtable of the Parliamentary Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children. First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the experts and the moderator who have agreed today to share their knowledge on the subject. I particularly would like to thank our colleagues of International Detention Coalition – today represented by Mr. Ben Lewis - which has helped and supported the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons to organise this event.

The purpose of this initiative is to inform you about the extent of this practice in some European countries and that, in some others, the relevant existing legislation is not applied and children are still detained because of their immigrant status. With this roundtable, the Committee wants to also reaffirm that detention has very negative effects on children's physical and psychological health and development. This is why the Parliaments of the Member States of the Council of Europe should take immediate measures to end the detention of immigrant children both in law and practice, and actively support the Campaign.

This initiative is just the first of a series of events that the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons is organizing in the framework of the Parliamentary Campaign. In fact, during the 4th part of the 2015 Session of the Parliamentary Assembly a second roundtable on alternatives of detention will take place, and we are currently looking for experts in this field.

Dear colleagues, today I also have the pleasure to present to you the new webpage of the Campaign which you can access by going onto the Parliamentary Assembly's website. It is a very useful tool to keep yourself updated on news and forthcoming events concerning the Campaign, as well as consult the relevant documents concerning the detention of immigrant children and alternatives to detention, such as the report on "The alternatives to immigration detention of children" issued by Rapporteur Ms. Tinatin Bokuchava on September 2014, Resolution 2020 (2014) and Recommendation 2056 (2014) that the Parliamentary Assembly unanimously adopted last October, and the Reply to this Recommendation made by the Committee of Ministers.

By consulting this webpage, you will have the opportunity to sign the online petition launched by our colleagues of International Detention Coalition to support the Global Campaign to End Child Detention. I can inform you that you can also support the petition in person during this Session by going to the stand of our Campaign next to the Hemicycle and signing the petition on paper as a demonstration of your commitment to this cause.

However, I have to express my disappointment for the position in the foyer that has been given to this stand of the Parliamentary Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children during this PACE Session. Indeed, this position is not practical and convenient enough to raise awareness on this sensitive issue. This is the reason why I would like to propose that the Chair of the Committee writes a letter to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly asking for a permanent site for the stand of our Campaign in a position that can give more visibility and exposure to our Campaign.

I thank you for your kind attention and I hope that you will take a few minutes to visit our stand and show your commitment to end the detention of immigrant children by signing this very important petition.