

19 NOVEMBER
WORLD
DAY



World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse - 19 November 2007

Report on the Geneva Conference

*“Television, Advertising, the Internet:
What is the influence on our children?”*



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✓ Program

On the occasion of
World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse
19 November and everyday!

Monday 19 November 2007

World Meteorological Organization
Room B - av. de la Paix 7Bis - 1202 Geneva



www.woman.ch - Children's Section

Program

Conference

"Progress in preventing child abuse - Annual review VIII"

Theme: "Television, Advertising, the Internet: What is the influence on our children?"

✓ **17h15 Opening**

- Mr. Jean Zermatten, Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, International Institute for the Rights of the Child Director
- Mrs. Fabienne Proz Jeanneret - Juge des mineurs
- Mrs. Elly Pradervand, WWSF Executive Director
 - UN Study on Violence against Children follow-up
 - WWSF TV spot

Announcement of the four laureate organizations of the 2007 WWSF Prize for prevention of child abuse

- Mrs. Laure Maitrejean, WWSF Children's Section Coordinator
 - Report on the international coalition and on laureate organizations. Every year, WWSF awards four organizations for innovative prevention activities.

✓ **17h40 Conference**

- Mr. Pierre Maudet, Conseiller administratif - Geneva, Président de la Commission fédérale de l'enfance et de la jeunesse
- Mrs. Francine Ulmer, Neuchâtel Department of public education - Responsible for prevention & ethic
- Mr. Olivier Guéniat, Chef de la police de sûreté - Neuchâtel
- Mr. Guy Mettan, Geneva Press Club - Executive Director
- Mrs. Sara Giardina, Lawyer
- Mrs. Martine Libertino, Association Duchamps-Libertino - President
- Mr. Christian Campiche, Journalist
- Mrs. Claire de Lavernette, World Movement of Mothers

✓ **19h30 Refreshments & Interviews**

✓ Conference “Progress in preventing child abuse – Annual review VII”

Every year, in Geneva and worldwide, the World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse is commemorated on 19 November. Since 2000, WWSF, Women’s World Summit Foundation, convener of the Day, organizes an annual conference-debate in Geneva on the theme “Progress in preventing child abuse - Annual review”. In 2007, WWSF chose to focus on the media and entitled the conference: “Television, Advertising, the Internet: What is the influence on our children?”



➤ Opening speeches

Mrs. Elly Pradervand, WWSF Executive Director



"Those who hold the mass media in their hands carry the responsibility of the world and the future of humanity," said Vaclav Havel. In this tone, Elly Pradervand, Executive Director of the WWSF, opened the eighth conference on World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse in Geneva. This day was created in 2000 as a reaction to an article published in the Geneva newspaper, *Le Temps*, which mentioned the existence of an International Day of Pedophilia on the Internet (25 April). "This unacceptable news catalyzed the creation of the World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse. The date 19 November was chosen to be in synergy with 20 November, the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child."

"Eight years later, the day is commemorated by more than 780 governmental- and non-governmental organizations in 128 countries. Thanks to the efforts of the coordinator of the Children's Section, Laure Mairejean, we are happy to report on the success of this yearly campaign, which includes networking with many organizations that work for the dignity and the rights of children. We would also like to thank our members, volunteers, and sponsors who made this year's success possible,"

continued Elly Pradervand. The sponsors are published on the global poster and on the Internet.

Elly Pradervand proposed, as a framework for this meeting, the words of George Bernard Shaw who said, "There are those who see the world the way it is and ask, why? And there are those who see the world the way it could be and ask, why not?"

Later, Mrs. Pradervand reminded the audience of the theme of the 2007 campaign: "Protect children from violence in the media"; this theme is also the focus of our conference. She also invited the audience and the participants to sign a petition, launched by Pro Juventute, addressed to the Federal Council, the Federal Parliament, and the Conference of Cantons to remind them that Switzerland ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes measures to protect children and youth from information and documents that could be harmful to their well being. This petition demands that uncontrolled crude scenes of violence in various media (computer or video games) must stop.

Elly Pradervand also shared some astonishing figures: more than one million images of children being sexually abused are posted on the Internet, more than 50% of the United Nations Member States in 138 countries do not have legal protection for children portrayed in pornography, and possession of pornographic material involving children is not a crime.

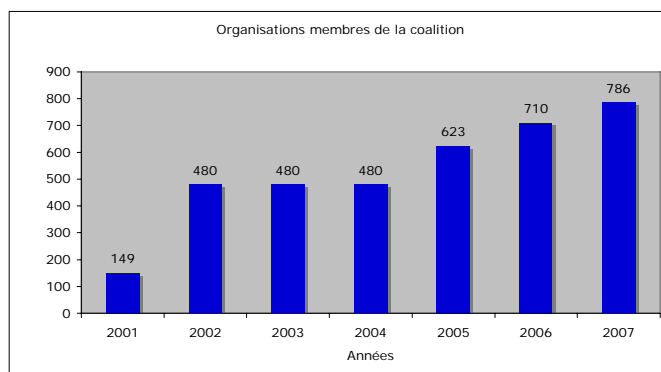
In concluding, Elly Pradervand mentioned the UN's study on violence against children, which carries as a central message that no violence towards children can be justified. All violence can be prevented.

Mrs. Laure Maitrejean, WWSF Children’s Section Coordinator - Report of the WWSF international coalition



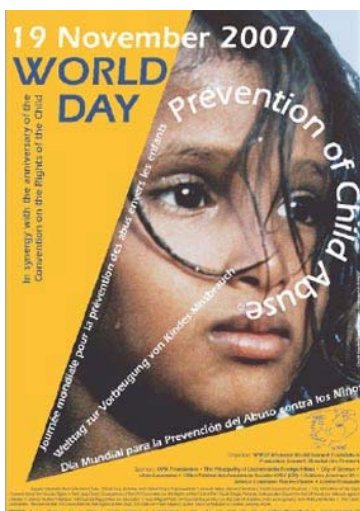
Immediately, **Laure Maitrejean** stressed the scope of the campaign: “Today, in Switzerland as well as in 127 other countries, 786 organizations mark the World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse. 786 organizations... The number of our partners has been continually increasing since the campaign was launched.”

She added, “In 2000, the year of the launch of the World Day, the notion of prevention seemed so abstract that only a few dared to venture in this direction. Today, thanks to activities of mobilization such as ours, prevention of child abuse as a priority has finally been



recognized at the international level. For example, one of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children invites States to prioritize prevention.”

Laure Maitrejean also insisted on the importance of the materials WWSF creates and disseminates around the world. The campaign poster, including a Call to Action (“Protect children from media violence” in 2007), also mentions all partner organizations, giving them visibility, recognition, and legitimacy for their activities and fundraising.



Laure Maitrejean mentioned that last year many of the 710 coalition member organizations sent their activity reports. These activities are compiled in a document available upon request and published on our website. Numerous

photos were then shared with the audience. “As you can see, these organizations know how to mobilize and sensitize the population: children and youth, parents, teachers, and various experts such as lawyers, doctors, social workers, the police, as well as political, judicial and religious authorities. Most of the activities consist of conferences, forums, workshops, demonstrations, television and radio programs and more and more calls to governments to make prevention of child abuse a priority,” added Laure Maitrejean.

The 19 November conference was also an opportunity for mentioning the WWSF Prize for Prevention of Child Abuse. Created in 2003, the Prize is annually given to four WWSF coalition member organizations that carry out innovative child abuse prevention activities (\$5000 US per year). Sixteen Prizes have been given so far. The four 2007 laureate organizations are the following:

- Society for Empowering Human Resources Pakistan (3000 US\$)
- Association Mondiale pour les Orphelins et les Enfants Abandonnés, Togo (1000 US\$)
- Observatorio sobre Infancia de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Colombia and
- Organisation Nationale des Femmes Rurales “Fleurs de Centrafrique”, Central African Republic (500 US\$ each).

For more information, please contact wdpca@wssf.ch or visit our website www.woman.ch.

Laure Maitrejean concluded with two pieces of good news: “the first piece of good news is from Burundi, where the Government, through the Ministry of Human Rights, gender and national solidarity, has agreed to commemorate the World Day, and the other good news is from Cameroon where the government agreed to sponsor the activities organized for the occasion of the World Day. These recognitions further add to those from Costa Rica, Jordan, Central African Republic and Argentina.”

Mrs. Fabienne Proz Jeanneret, Judge - Geneva juvenile court



Right away, **Mrs. Fabienne Proz Jeanneret** based her presentation on real experience. “By virtue of my office of judge in charge of protecting children, fulfilled during 14 years at the Tribunal tuteur de Genève, my activities consisted of taking measures to protect children who suffered physical, emotional and sexual abuse or neglect in their families. These situations are one of the most tragic experiences a child can have.”

If families should answer children’s fundamental needs, be their first circle of protection, and help them to develop harmoniously and to socialize themselves, Mrs. Proz Jeanneret sadly noted that in the cases she had to deal with, these families were dysfunctional. Measures are then taken to watch the child’s evolution or to support the parents, and, in extreme cases, to take the responsibility for the children away from their parents.

As a judge at the juvenile court for only a few months, she mainly meets adolescents who have adopted violent behaviors: theft with physical violence, sexual assault, etc.

“You won’t be surprised to know that, in my new job, I meet adolescents committing violence today who, in the past, I protected from their parents’ maltreatment.” She immediately added, “My intention is not to say that all children who suffered violence will become violent people. It would be wrong and too simplistic, because many factors can influence children and adolescents.”

Another important point Mrs. Proz Jeanneret added: The increase of offences linked to violence is real. But it certainly has to be connected with everyone’s sensitivity, culture and the evolution of a mindset that lead victims and their families to more frequently register a complaint. But these acts are synonymous of great suffering for victims, perpetrators and their respective parents. And for adolescents, they often find expression in marginalization, academic failure, or dropping out of school.

The judge’s intervention placed things in their context in her conclusion: “We have to try hard to aim at an harmonious development of minors and to consider all the aspects that can influence their evolution so as to influence States’ policies for the youth, to sensitize the public, and to organize events such as this conference today in order to fight against violence.”

Mr. Jean Zermatten, Vice-president of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and Director of the International Institute for the Rights of the Child (Sion)

On the eve of the 18th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, **Mr. Jean Zermatten** thanked the WWSF’s initiative and underlined that the audience, who had come in great numbers, proved that the Foundation was right when choosing the extremely sensitive theme “prevention of child abuse”.

Mr. Zermatten admitted he is very skeptical about the capacity to answer the questions raised. “Skeptical because I often discussed with people from the media (press, radio and television) these means of communication’s influence seen by many as harmful and negative, and I often received a categorical answer saying that there was no direct influence between images and young people’s behavior. That continues to surprise me. I remain without an answer.”

While he was a judge, Mr. Zermatten noted several direct effects of television and Internet, notably in two areas. First, the use of violence by young people who had adopted behaviors directly stemming from images they had seen and they could not have invented. Second, behavior violating societal norms in which very young children act out behavior seen on the Internet, pornographic films, or possibly on television. “That does not mean that all the children who see violent images on television become sexual offenders,” clarified Mr. Zermatten.



Mr. Zermatten also mentioned another fundamental point: the confusion in role models that are proposed by television and the advertising. Virtual role models are problematic because children need people and figures to identify with.

Another sad report: very busy parents leave the education of their children to the television. “The number of hours children are under television supervision can make one shudder because of the quantity of images they receive, and the absence of any control. We are in a situation of extreme risk.” These risks increase on the Internet when children are, for example, “chatting”. Who is behind this e-mail address, what is his goal? Although he is not a fierce opponent of new technologies, Mr. Zermatten admitted that intrinsically they present risks, especially when children are left to themselves.

To conclude, Mr. Zermatten insisted on Article 17 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child on children's right to information, asking States to ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

➤ Conference:

Television, Advertising, the Internet: What is the influence on our children?

How can one transform a sensitive education into an educational act?



in future years.

Coming specially from Neuchâtel, **Mrs. Francine Ulmer, Responsible for "Prevention and ethic" of the Bureau de l'Informatique Scolaire (BIS)**, shared with the audience the project entitled, "How to transform a sensitive education into an educational act?" Because education about the new media is the best preventive measure, computers with Internet connection have been introduced in all classes of primary and secondary schools to give educational and preventive tools to all actors, school directors, teachers, students and parents. The Canton of Neuchâtel has chosen to inform all in the teaching profession and a lot of parents using both compulsory and recommended information sessions. The campaign, launched in 2002, has increased its momentum by collaborating with the Swiss campaign "Stop-Child-Pornography-on-Internet" since September 2005. Through this campaign Mr. Olivier Guéniat, Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department - Canton of Neuchâtel and Mrs. Ulmer met all teachers to inform and prepare them to turn sensitive situations into educational acts. The campaign will continue with parents

Mrs. Ulmer drew the audience's attention to some of the images we have access to, emphasizing the fact that we are shown pictures that effect us solely on an emotional level. They take us out of the field of rationality so as to open us up to advertising once our defenses have been lowered. "We don't get away from these kinds of images unhurt. Children especially are not equipped to decipher such things. They don't have enough hindsight," underlined Mrs. Ulmer. What also strikes her is that some of them will not receive any parental guidance after being traumatized by violent or pornographic images. Most of the time, they take about three weeks before talking to an adult (teacher, mediator, parent).

Mrs. Ulmer also stressed that it is absolutely wrong to think one cannot find pornography on the Internet without a credit card. Parents and children have free access to such images. "Everything is possible on the Internet. Even what I could not have imagined. Images of extreme sexual violence, zoophilia, sadomasochism... All that is free and available in abundance."

Adults need to have their parental competences restored. Computer skills have to be clearly differentiated from the right to use computers. Even if parents don't know how to use a computer, they have to control, supervise and look at what the child is doing. Mrs. Ulmer then underlined with humor "some parents are deceived into believing that the Internet is the best and cheapest nanny after school!"

Then, Mrs. Ulmer raised a fundamental point: It is important to not only expose the problem, but also to give tools to teachers, young people, and their parents. The Réseau Pédagogique Neuchâtelois (www.rpn.ch) puts online pedagogical resources at the disposal of teachers, children and parents since 2001. It is equipped with a filter (Websense) that prevents students from accessing inappropriate websites. Parents are invited to put protection software on the family computer. A program is available on the **RPN website (www.rpn.ch)**. A secure research program has also been created, which can be used by teachers as well as by parents in their homes.

"What we ask parents and teachers is to supervise. We don't forbid because it's counterproductive. We create very simple but effective rules: when and how long can a child use the computer; place the computer where it can be supervised, in a place of frequent passage; the child should not shut the door when using it. It is also possible to make a list of websites the children can visit and use a search engine for children available on the RPN Home page. We teach children to not give any personal information and we forbid them to send their picture. These simple measures show that the best prevention is education about the new media and that this education is the teachers and the parents' responsibility," concluded Mrs. Ulmer.

What solutions?

As both a **Geneva City Council Member** and as a **President of the Swiss Federal Commission on Childhood and Youth**, **Mr. Pierre Maudet** expressed himself on the theme of the conference. Immediately, he got to the heart of the matter: "For several months, indeed several years, we have tried to sensitize the media to the development of pedocriminality, cybercriminality, we have great difficulty in getting the media to become more self critical about themselves and sensitive to our concerns."



Although the media give an image of children and young people that is sometimes a little bit biased when compared with reality, Mr. Maudet underlined that today there are new trends: above all a huge problem of confusion at different levels. **The first trend** that appears in most of the cities: Children are abused, are victims, or, paradoxically, are offenders at a younger and younger age. Small children, sometimes under 10 years old, don't master the technologies they have access to, such as mobile phones, with which they can circulate photos. **The second trend**: the confusion between the real and the virtual world. Mr. Maudet underlined "a certain trivialization of some acts, notably in schools in the canton of Geneva where victims become offenders. They have difficulty to get out of this vicious circle."

He shared a study on the mental conditioning produced by pornographic advertising. It revealed that repetitive messages tend to become banal, producing a daily vision of women or relations with women that create confusion between pornography and eroticism. **Finally, we don't know what the norm is anymore.**

According to the Federal Commission, there is a huge problem of lack of references. Solutions to effectively fight this problem are first **limiting access** and training to intervene technologically. But this solution has limits because technological means are developing very fast and protection software is easily bypassed. Then, **raise awareness of political leaders** and advance the penal norms. This awareness is difficult for a generation sensitive to certain problems such as transport, pharmaceuticals, the arms race, etc. but which faces difficulties in creating a proper image of what childhood and youth represent today, what are the capacities and the resources that can be used in positive or in negative ways. Finally, **concerning social competences** in families and schools, developing preventive measures with little means, with reduced federal budgets and with cantonal budgets that are tight is difficult but essential, underlined Mr. Maudet.

Pierre Maudet ended by stating that society must give schools and parents the means to help children and youth to find their references themselves.

From pornography to 'pornophagy': an alarming evolution towards a culture of sexual consumption



Specially coming from Neuchâtel too, **Mr. Olivier Guéniat, Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department - Neuchâtel Cantonal Police**, shared with the panelists and the audience the Swiss Office for Criminality Prevention campaign "Stop-Child-Pornography-on-Internet". All the cantons have been involved since the end of 2005 through the end of 2007, and even beyond.

In Neuchâtel, the aim of the campaign, together with the "Prevention and ethics" project presented by Francine Ulmer, is to arouse parents' vigilance, because there is a gap between parents' knowledge and children's practices. Many parents don't master the Internet and ignore what is hidden in terms of pornography. They must be aware of the risks the children are exposed to (cyberpedophiles) and the offenses the children could commit, because it is their legal responsibility too. Also, it is important to remember that the police are present on the Internet. Finally, we have to draw parents' attention to their educational role. "It is not a question of demonizing the Internet," clarified Mr.

Guéniat. "Children need to be trained. But there are some risks. Children have to be supervised on the Internet."

Through the cases he had to deal with, Olivier Guéniat noticed an inversion of power between children and adults. "The higher we are in the population pyramid (i.e. the older the parents), the more evident this inversion is in terms of technological mastery," he added. Indeed, children have been trained from a young age and have mastered new technologies better than adults. He then raised the problem of the confusion between what is real and what is virtual. He quoted the child who watches pornography as an example. "He doesn't know that it is science fiction, that a pornographic movie is not filmed in only one shooting but that it needs weeks of work, that when there is violence, it's torture and that it is not the normal example of sexuality between a man and a

woman.” According to Olivier Guéniat, the end result is an image of women that is distorted and degrading and which produces many psychological problems.

When carrying out searches, Mr. Guéniat had noticed that pornography does not have the same place in families anymore. Before, it was hidden. Today, it is frequent to find it among DVDs, easily accessible to children. “We denounce this. Parents ignore that it is an offence in the Swiss penal code,” he specified.

Searches of hard discs also reveal that there are more and more pornographic films in adolescents’ computers. They are downloaded without their parents’ knowledge. They watch them, absorb them, and modify their behavior according to what they have seen.

Olivier Guéniat talked about pornography because access to it has literally exploded thanks to the Internet. “We moved from an age when we had to go to a sex shop to have pornography, where children had no access, to an age where pornography takes root in families, with the birth of video cassettes, video tape recorders, mail orders, CDs, and DVDs. Today, with the Internet, we have access to millions of pornographic pages in 0.28 seconds free. There is over-consumption and overabundance.”

Olivier Guéniat underlined a new phenomenon: women are becoming pornography consumers. Adolescents find them attractive because of easy access, too. He refers to video clips where women are often portrayed as sexual beings, “bitches”, associated with macho-dominating models. According to him, these clichés have an influence on adolescents seeking identification who repeat some of these codes. “Adolescent girls see themselves as pieces of meat, with a cold sexuality, becoming legal cases. They perform the services the boy requests,” he added.

Swiss law punishes electronic importations of zoophilia and child pornography. According Mr. Guéniat, this law does not go far enough, because consumption without downloading is not illegal. He reminded the audience that the parents and schools control the Internet. But this is at a cost.

“We don’t know how many of them are influenced by these images, led to imitate them, or to over-consume. It is probably a growing minority. The number of cases involving young people and this kind of cold sexuality is increasing in all the cantons. The damage to some of these girls is irreversible,” he concluded.

Do the media play a preventive or an educational role?

Guy Mettan, Executive Director of the Geneva Press Club, wished to go back to the more classic media: press, radio, and television. The issue is not really sexual abuse or pornography, except for some “trash” reviews, but their big responsibility towards children and youth is in regard to violence in general: physical violence in war films, cartoons, etc. According to him, the media has a responsibility regarding the broadcasting of a certain kind of violence. “As for me, the answer to the question do the media influence young people is YES,” he added.



To corroborate his remarks, he gave the example of Columbine in the United States or the recent situation in Finland where a young man killed around ten students. “It is obvious that if they would not have had access to the Internet or to various violent images in the divers media, they would not have committed such acts.” According to Mr. Mettan, the negative influence of the media is evident. But we should not forget that the media can also have a positive influence.

Another fundamental point Mr. Mettan underlined, “Journalists hate to say that they have a responsibility. However, I think that we have to remind them of such a responsibility. Television and press editors need to be told this also. They also hate that. On the other hand, journalists and editors are agree to put the sacrosanct freedom of expression forward. Although freedom of expression is a right, a human right that has to be defended, this does not prevent them from taking responsibility.”

“We are all confronted with the following ambivalence toward the media: we are continually criticizing them but constantly courting them. We court them so that they may talk about us, because if they don’t talk about our activities, we don’t have any sponsors. This contradiction is very difficult to manage,” he added.

To conclude, Mr. Mettan stressed that we must not be afraid of reminding journalists and editors of their duty, even if we have to be deprived of channels, articles, and television in the following weeks or months. This is worthwhile. According to him, this fight must go on, at the risk of being called old fashioned or of wanting to restore censorship.

Web 2.0 Generation: From victim to offender, a matter of interconnections?



Mrs. Sara Giardina, lawyer chose to focus on the Internet. "The Internet is the media children and adolescents prefer. It seems to be preferred to television. It is also the most dangerous media because it is less controlled and evolves more often," she started.

Mrs. Giardina noted that Internet has already developed a lot. Originally, it offered only two possibilities: those who published the information and those who went and found it. Adolescents were not information suppliers. Risks were limited to the information that was given to them. But today, the Internet is interactive (blogs, chats, etc.). Children expose themselves more and more. They go farther in their communications. They can also become offenders: they attack other people's reputation, they commit offenses linked to copyright (e.g. publishing of commercial music on one's blog) and offenses linked to the protection of personal information (publishing pictures of friends on one's blog without authorization). Blogs also reveal a communication drift with adolescent girls publishing themselves in sexy postures and calling for comments. "Am I

more enticing than my friend..." Filming an offense with one's mobile phone and publishing it on the Internet is another trend Mrs. Giardina wanted to share with the audience.

"I have difficulty in presenting adolescents and children as offenders. I started with that, but I think that it is a consequence of our own behavior as adults and of our negligence," she underlined.

Legally, it is difficult to protect children because of the Internet's ubiquity, legislative diversity between States, and connectivity that can be intra- or extra- national. As an example, Mrs. Giardina mentioned that the age of consent for sex is between 9 and 21 years old worldwide. How are we to control what has a pedophilic nature? "This must not block us in our fight against this kind of abuse," she said. Some tools are already going in that direction, such as the Convention on Cybercrime whose objective is to harmonize law (determining the age of consent at 18 with a possible modification at 16 minimum) and to promote inquiries at an international level. Switzerland signed this convention in 2001, but has not yet ratified it. This Convention came into force in 22 countries. But 95 countries have no laws on pedopornography and 22 countries that have this kind of law do not make the providers responsible to denounce sites that have a pedopornographic nature. Switzerland is one of them.

Mrs. Giardina continued on about predatory acts: "Chats are a pedophile predator's fish-tank since they can contact children on the Internet, coax them, and squeeze out personal information. It's frightening because according to a Swiss national campaign, 80% of chatting children have already been sexually harassed (verbal seduction and sexual abuse attempts and preparations)," she warned. Recently, the Federal Court had to answer the following question: Does the simple act of chatting with a minor about sexual matters constitute a preparatory act (not punishable) or an offense (punishable). The Federal court decided that all the activity that took place during the chat was a non punishable preparatory act. "I think that, as in France, Switzerland should demonstrate such a behavior as an offense. According to me, talking about sex on the Internet with a minor is already an offense," she claimed. "I think that laws have a lot to do with it, be it simply in getting a message across. We have a message to deliver: we do not tolerate this kind of behavior, we want to protect children," she added.

Mrs. Giardina did not forget to underline that the law progresses despite everything. The two Swiss government chambers agreed to consider as punishable simply the voluntary viewing of pedopornography on the Internet.

"New technologies are an extraordinary tool and provide us with solutions too," she added. Indeed, there are different kinds of Internet filter software according to the child's age. The child is then authorized to surf on some websites. So, the risk is limited. There are also tools to fight against pedopornography for firms or civil services like Netclean that works as an antivirus by blocking the entry of pedopornographic information. Finally, there is software called Logprotect that blocks outgoing information. For example, it is possible to define the parameters of a software to prevent children from giving their name, phone number, etc.

As a conclusion, Mrs. Giardina invited the audience to visit the SCOCI website (Cybercrime Coordination Unit Switzerland) and to fill out an online form about illegal website addresses.

Cause and effect between adult behavior, media, and violence against children

Martine Libertino, trainer, has given consultations for 27 years and has trained adults in mediation courses for 15 years. She shared her practical experience with the audience, her encounters with women who were raped or maltreated during childhood, often by family members or friends and who kept silent for several years. "Maltreatment really exists and once children have become adults they suffer as a result of it," she noted.



She raised the question, "Why have we reached the point in our present society of simply even having pornography, of letting it invade our computers and T.V. sets, in a way that causes children to suffer?" She added, "Is it more important to protect a child from what he will in any case have access to later on, or is it more important to understand why these images exist? How can we prove our good faith and our credibility to a child by explaining to him that our refusal to let him have access to these shocking images and pornographic sites is just, when we ourselves have access to them? The refusal of these images is not a question of age but of collective consciousness. If the reverse were true, this would mean that as soon as a child arrives at a certain age, he will be rewarded by accessing all that was earlier denied, with the forbidden fruit."

According to Ms. Libertino, it is not enough to speak of consequences. We should look for causes. "We adults, we are responsible. If an adult is a well balanced person, if they are happy in their life, if their life conforms to their ideal, things are quite simple. ... What certain media propose is the reflection of what the majority of adults, unconsciously or not, demand and live. This violence is therefore a consequence of all that the individual has gone through in his daily life (family conflicts, power struggles in the couple or the work place, blackmailing and manipulation which generate fear that itself gives rise in the long-term to aggressiveness). We can therefore say that adults are responsible for this violence because they accept it and sometimes even give an example of it to children. When I speak of violence, I do not speak only of physical aggressiveness. The feeling of not being understood, the fear of being rejected, jealousy, the desire to control one's life and the life of others, mistrust, guilt, pride, all these emotional problems lead to frustrations which themselves generate feelings of injustice. In the long run these give rise to a violence which is more or less expressed and ends up with people punishing their inner circle or themselves with choices that go against the well being of all. This is the most common form of violence."

For a number of years, Martine Libertino has seen a deterioration in this area which does not stem from a negative intention, or from a desire of parents to not take care of their children, from indifference, and selfishness. According to her, a wrong interpretation of freedom – both among adults and children – tends to develop a feeling of exclusion, of selfishness, and of laxity, which increases problems of violence. This deterioration also comes with a lack of self-knowledge. As adults, parents also have emotional problems and do not manage to educate their children appropriately. These emotional problems could be linked to conflicts, problems of communication during childhood, taboo subjects like sexuality. Ms. Libertino sees a paradox here : we speak a lot about sexuality, we openly exhibit sexuality, but the subject of sex remains taboo within the family. According to her, for the subject of sexuality to not be taboo with children, parents should be able to speak about it in a simple manner. It will thus be easier to broach the serious topics should they one day present themselves.

Later, Ms. Libertino discussed the problems parents face in the education of children. We should help parents communicate with each other so that they can communicate with their children. "We need sufficient discernment, sufficient knowledge of ourselves and of our children so as to be role models our children will one day wish to imitate," she concluded.

A press without an ideal has no reason to exist



Christian Campiche, journalist at once emphasized the evident responsibility of journalists in the information that they disseminate. "This responsibility of journalists is evident and is laid out in a charter: the Declaration of the Duties and Rights of Journalists. It is our Bible," he says. He reminded the audience of what the charter states in its preamble, i.e. that the responsibility of journalists towards the public takes precedence over their responsibility toward public authorities or their employers. "This means that journalists have the right to rebel when they see that something is unethical or contradicts their values," he stated.

When starting a newsletter called "Lettre hebdomadaire Journal de Genève – Gazette de Lausanne," he produced guidelines which can be helpful to reflect upon. Mr. Campiche talks about the materialism which has developed throughout the twentieth century, served by increasingly aggressive new communication technologies. This materialism expresses itself in unrestricted consumerism that causes a lot of harm, such as the growing social divide, the emergence of a society resembling a sort of a garbage bin or environmental disasters.

Christian Campiche continued on the topic of children. "One has the impression that some newspapers do all they can to push the young generations towards all that glitters," he added. As a result, youth are a direct target for those media which more and more look up to advertising as a source of inspiration. He notes that whereas until now advertising represented 60% of the income of newspapers, in the case of the newspapers distributed free of cost, it represented 100% of their income. A consequence is that editors in the classical sense have been replaced by the advertising agencies which well understand the power that the young have in increasing their revenues.

Marketing specialists agree that despite their weak buying power, the young who are less than thirty years of age represent a privileged target for marketing, not only due to their tendency to consume but also due their role as "trendsetters"- both with the younger generation that tries to imitate them and the older ones who are attempting to stay within the trend. According to Christian Campiche, it is indispensable to enter their milieu so as to understand their values and their behavior that they may become levers for change. "Those who wish to infiltrate the young are not the parents but the marketing specialists who would like to sell their products," he stated. Unlike the parents, people in advertising have no scruples in conditioning the young and the media represent a golden relay to reach their aims. "The free newspapers, geared towards targeting the age group between 15 and 35 have excelled in this cheap journalism which disseminates gloss and that which is totally insignificant."

Christian Campiche equally emphasized another vocation encouraged by the media: communication. Many young people today confuse the job of communicator and the job of journalist. Journalism and communication are two completely different jobs. "This does not prevent journalists from choosing to enter the field of communication after a few years in the press," he adds. Communication offers many outlets and especially much higher salaries. However, the journalist loses all independence. He is nothing more than the spokesperson of an institution, and he becomes a manipulator. This is shown in Christian Campiche's newsletter "Info en danger": the collusion between advertising and editing.

He warned aspiring journalists, indicating that they should not use this job as a springboard. He reminded them of their civic responsibility in this profession and its clear role in regard to youth. "Newspapers need to keep in mind that their role is to educate persons and not consumers," he said.

In the name of "Info – in- danger", Christian Campiche lodged a complaint with the Swiss Press Council (the body for examining journalists) which, after a few months of research, corroborated him. This success does not put an end to the fight. He now waits to see what measures are recommended. He reminds his audience that the position taken by this press watchdog is little enforced. He emphasized the importance of the other actors (the public authorities, education) in helping the work of those newspapers that offer an alternative to the press dominated by advertising. "It ultimately belongs to journalists themselves to undertake the housecleaning," he concluded.

The Role of the Mother in Media Management

Claire de Lavernette, the Representative of the World Movement of Mothers to the United Nations, emphasized the importance of the family and the environment surrounding the child in the prevention of child abuse. She concentrated her speech on the role of mothers, without ignoring the role of fathers who are co-educators. "However, I think that in all matters concerning media management and other forms of management within the context of education, mothers feel that they are more involved because they spend three times more time taking care of their children compared to the fathers," she said.

Claire de Lavernette affirmed the mother's key role is in education. Mothers have to face a number of challenges due to their involvement with day to day activities. "They are always in the front line in watching the children and teaching them all the rules of life within society", she reminded. It was important to acknowledge the competence of mothers but especially to help them fulfill their preventive roles and their role in managing abuses. She stressed that the prevention of such abuses must begin very early: "In the Mother's womb. Specialists say that it is while the child is still in the Mother's womb that her or his relation to the world is imprinted on the child. It is on the basis of the quality of this relationship that a child grows in a balanced manner," she added.



Ms. de Lavernette pointed out the equal importance of imposing rules and limitations that should evolve according to the age of the child. She raised up strongly against television being made available to children who are less than three years old. "This morning, I signed a petition on the Internet to delay the arrival in France of a television chain that broadcasts uninterrupted programs for children between six months and three years of age. It is horrifying to think of the irreversible consequences that this could have on the development of the brain." She drew the attention of her audience on studies conducted which prove that children who are put in front of television screens, with no interaction with objects that surround them, would never be able to attain a true maturity and would in some way become handicapped in assuming the responsibility of their lives.

Claire de Lavernette highlighted the additional role of the mother in acting as the filter for images at the cinema and at home. She reaffirmed that mothers have to help children in managing the media, decoding images, and using them with maximum security. Mothers attempt to inculcate the right values in their children, give them a sense of judgment and a critical spirit". She insisted on the fact that a child should be preserved from their "I want everything now" mantra, that could ruin his independence and very quickly become an addiction. If this happens, he will confuse the virtual and the real. The adverse effects are numerous but we only become conscious of them once scientific proofs are available. This education is long and requires from mothers many qualities such as availability, patience and sacrifice.

The speaker reminded her audience of difficulties confronted by mothers today. She mentioned the recent trend in our society where mothers are the heads of 80% of single parent families. Most of them have to assume double roles, combining their professional and family lives. "With the arrival of the screens, they are completely helpless. This is a source of additional tension in the family. Managing the family is all the tougher. The World Movement of Mothers puts in place various forms of support to help mothers fulfill their role," she added.

In France, for example, there are mothers groups with mothers from numerous cultures. This is an occasion for them to meet and exchange their knowledge and ideas on themes related to education, like training to listen and mutual respect. "A real investment by public authorities would be to rely on the competence of mothers and to assist them in fulfilling their role."

Ms. de Lavernette emphasized that at the international level, the World Movement of Mothers is involved in numerous projects aiming to create a balance between family and professional life. Social change is mediated through the mothers who are the primary educators of the citizens. "Nothing replaces dialogue within the family. It is also through mothers, the pillars of the family, that we can win the fight against pornography and shocking images", she concluded.

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