Jean Zermatten (transcript of English statement)

I’ve had the pleasure to serve the Committee (as the Chair) for three years now and I have to say that I have also had the privilege to follow the development, the advocacy and also the adoption of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.

In 2005, also my first Day of General Discussion, was on this theme, and if I take all the Concluding Observations that the Committee has issued I remark that this deprivation of parental care has been a recurrent obsession of the Committee. Why this obsession?

I think that a wide range of factors can intervene here but, first of all, I want to say that the concern of the Committee is about the large number of children deprived of parental care and, in many cases, for reason of material poverty of the family. Second, is also the poor condition when care are provided and last, maybe I think that there is also a big concern on the law progression when we are speaking on measure on root causes for vulnerable children and for children at-risk of being deprived of parental care.

This is the main reason, and the reason also why the Committee in 2004, started all the process of legislating the Guidelines, why the Committee adopted full support and give also all this attention to this project, and I think that when, in 2009, the UN (General) Assembly endorsed these Guidelines, adopted them as UN Guidelines, it was a very good and important step for all children in the world, and…

Since this moment the Committee has used the principle of these Guidelines in almost all its Concluding Observations and, I think, that very few State Party escape criticism on this theme.

But now we have the Guidelines we have to make a step forward, it is to implement the Guidelines, to transform these Guidelines in the reality as for all agreed UN standards and this will be now the test.

Because, I think, that if the Convention have basic rules on care of children there is a need of more concrete and precise guidance for the State Party. There is a need to understand the Guidelines. There is a need to understand what policies as provided in the Guidelines are meaning, and there is also a need, and I think it is an important need, to adopt rules at the national level and also at the regional level, and…

One thing that also seems important is that these Guidelines are not only for the State they are also for every person, every organisation, every NGO, concerned by the care of children deprived precisely of parental care, and…

I welcome the fact that we now have a new handbook “Moving Forward” and the title it is very clear, it is precise, that this book is provided for all persons concerned at all levels, local, regional, national or international level. First, to better understand what the Guidelines provided. Second, to design really the policy and third, to establish all the mechanisms in the interests of the children, and…

I think that this handbook will be a wonderful tool for everybody, every organisation, and every government, concerned by the care of their children.

Thank you.