Measures to protect minors in the European Union

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The Council and ministers, meeting in the Council, and after having expressed solidarity with the victims of paedophilia and their families, adopted the following declaration: Declaration by the Council and by the Ministers of Education meeting in Council session on the protection of minors and on actions to combat paedophilia ‘All minors are entitled to a childhood that offers them security and affection and encourages their full development. Recent tragic events, which have highlighted the physical, emotional and sexual exploitation of minors, have revealed that this right is being flagrantly disregarded. The Council and the Ministers of Education affirm that educational systems should continue to endeavour at all times to offer young persons a secure environment where they are protected and surrounded by affection and where they can grow to become well-balanced adults capable of playing an active role in the development of society. The Council and the Ministers of Education know that no society is free from paedophilia and are aware of how this scourge can affect the victims, their families and the environment in which they live. The Ministers of Education express their profound sympathy with all those who have suffered, both physically and emotionally, from the perpetration of these crimes. The Council and the Ministers of Education are of the view that in order to provide effective protection for minors and to combat paedophilia various measures are needed in a number of areas at national, European and international level; for this reason they welcome the initiatives that have been taken by the Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs and by the Ministers responsible for telecommunications. The educational systems, and especially teaching staff and schools, have an important role to play in the protection of children in general and in combating paedophilia. Exchanges of information on the practices and initiatives implemented by the various Member States, and compiled into a summary report by the Commission, will help the relevant authorities monitor those initiatives being taken by the educational systems to protect children and to prevent them becoming the object of physical, emotional and sexual ill-treatment.’