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## Alexander Bastrykin holds working meeting with Children's ombudsperson



Chairman of the Investigative Committee Alexander Bastrykin has today held a working meeting with Children's Commissioner Anna Kuznetsova. The meeting was also attended by heads of a number of units of the Investigative Committee's central office and officials of the Children's commissioner's office. Mr. Bastrykin congratulated freshly appointed ombudsperson and expressed hope and willingness for constructive cooperation for protection of children.

During the meeting Mr. Bastrykin pointed out a number of negative tendencies which required special supervision. This way, the number of crimes committed against minors has been going up steadily for the past 5 years. Between 2012 and 2015 investigators recognized 65,000 minors as victims of crimes, more than half of them (over 34,000) are children. He added: "Even more disturbing is the fact that the number of cases opened into sex crimes committed against minors has almost doubled in the past two years (6,499 in 2012 against 10,942 in 2015)."

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Mr. Bastrykin and Ms. Kuznetsova discussed the surge in the crimes committed against children by their family members. In 2015, 690 underage victims of sex crimes suffered sexual abuse from their family members with 260 of them from their parents. The practice of prosecuting parents or guardians for failing to raise the minor, involving minors in crimes or antisocial actions shows that in 2015, there were 3,987 reports of sex crimes, which is almost half again as many as previous year. Most of the instances (90.6%) were revealed by investigative authorities during probes in other cases or procedural checks.

The officials noted that neglect, opportunity to drink alcohol, lack of organized leisure or proper educational work are risk factors for involving minors into criminal activity. Issues of legal regulation of guardianship authorities' activity were also reviewed. It was noted that unfortunately there was no unified system of responsibility, no legal sanctions, so for example neither neighbors, nor a physician, or a school principle aware that the guardian has maltreated the child can be charged for not reporting it. Moreover, practice shows that a report if timely made could have prevented a whole number of crimes against children's lives or health.

A burning problem of inadequate state control over foster families that leads to crimes committed against adopted children, was also raised during the meeting. There are instances when adopted children were used as slaves, or they were recruited for sects or terrorist organizations, or used by foster parents to solve their financial problems, etc. Mr. Bastrykin urged active preventive work with parents, legal guardians and other persons living with children; thorough checks of living conditions of families with foster children and observance of rights and legal interests of minors by a commission involving medical staff and children's psychologists.

Addressing Commissioner Kuznetsova Mr. Bastrykin said that "threats children had to face these days are becoming more and more sophisticated." A great danger is actions of persons spreading online the information promoting suicide and urging minors to kill themselves. Teenagers, who find themselves in a difficult situation, adopt a suicidal model easily and make the irretrievable step. The Chairman added that "the situation is complicated by such factors as: the mass media which give detailed coverage of each suicidal act, making other teenagers imitate those suicides; the Internet, which contains readily accessible sites and groups portraying different methods of suicides, or social media with "suicide clubs". The current laws have no sanction against those inclining others to suicide, if their actions lack threats, maltreatment or systematic disparagement. This is why there is urgent need of introducing criminal liability for actions aimed at inclining to suicide, in particular by spreading such information online or in mass media, including the Internet. In addition, the results of probes into children's suicides have shown that there is no governmental body responsible for checking the Internet for prohibited information on suicide methods and calls for suicides. Such oversight has cost many teenagers their lives. An interdepartmental working group set up under the Investigative Committee is now working on it."

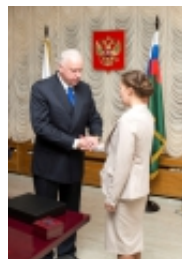
In turn, Ms. Kuznetsova pointed out that efficient cooperation with all governmental, non-governmental and social agencies responsible for protection of children's rights was necessary for her

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to accomplish her missions. “Of course we will try to keep everything from the practice of previous children’s ombudsmen, which has proven to be effective instruments in helping people. But we already can see areas that have to be corrected and improved. First of all, we are going to focus on systematic approach to solving specific problems and consolidation of governmental and public resources in most vital fields, particularly, programs aimed at preventing violation of children’s rights,” Commissioner Kuznetsova said. Mr. Bastrykin added that the Investigative Committee was ready to provide any assistance within its competence, which encompasses a wide range of capabilities, including penal measures.

The speakers were of unanimous opinion that the main problem is indifference of officials. There is no place for bureaucracy in caring about children. Only caring parents, teachers, psychologists and public figures are able to make happy childhood. The participants of the meeting came to a conclusion that it was necessary to develop a bilateral agreement and outlined ways of constructive and efficient collaboration for dealing with the said problems.

## Изображения



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