



## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 46<sup>th</sup> SESSION

Annual full day meeting on the rights of the child: the rights of the child and the SDGs – 1 March 2021

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and children's rights are deeply interlinked.
- Children's rights are threatened due to the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- It is of utmost importance to include children into decision making.
- In building back from Covid-19, children should be put at the centre of the recovery efforts.

*MORNING MEETING - Securing a future for today's children and the generations to come.*

**Ms. Michelle Bachelet**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (opening statement):

The SDGs are a pledge for an equal future for all on a healthy planet. Discrimination, inequality and lack of political will, mean children's rights often remain a wish instead of a reality.

Covid-19 placed children's rights at threat all around the world: forced labour, child marriage, domestic violence. Within last year the number of children living in poverty increased by 142 million. Lockdowns affected 90 percent of students in a world where one third of children do not have access to remote education. Those who were already marginalized and discriminated are being affected the worst: child with disabilities, girls, migrants, displaced.

Empowering children has never been a greater global urgency. Closing the gap between child rights obligations and their implementation on the ground will be the solution to recovering better. It is an effective strategy to enhance the overall development of everyone. We need to break intergenerational cycles of suffering.

**Ms. Henrietta Fore**, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF):

We cannot achieve the SDGs without putting children's rights first. Poverty and inequality are exacerbated due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a global community we need to use this moment to strengthen community help. We need to close the digital divide which keeps millions of children out of digital education.

UNICEF is investing in stronger social protection programs and started to tackle the roots of poverty and inequality around the world. Children's rights must be at the heart of every country's strategies to combat climate change. Children must be empowered as agents of change. Nothing for the children without the children.

**Fred**, Child human rights defender:

Due to poverty, children in street situations are struggling to access clean water, sanitation and hand-washing facilities. This puts them at the risk of contracting diseases such as Covid-19 and Cholera. In areas affected by climate change, children and their families have been forced to leave their homes. Climate change will affect children's well being. As children, we recommend that governments should:

- Ensure children in street situation have access to quality healthcare and education.
- Take steps to ensure good standards of living for children by working hand in hand with civil society.
- Support the rescue, rehabilitation and reunification of children in street situation with their families.

**Ms. Trisha Shetty**, Chief Executive Officer of SheSays and Pdt of the Steering Cmtee of the Paris Peace Forum:

We must acknowledge the deep state of crisis we are all in. From the pandemic, to the climate crisis to the crisis of inequality, but critically the crisis of leadership. Too many of our children are living in a world where extreme poverty, climate change, failure of democracy and barriers to human rights is the new normal.

When we hit "reset", we must remember that political will and politicians are renewable resources. Children are currently raising their voices, they are calling for change. Tomorrow's leaders are on the streets, on social media. Climate activist around the world unite to speak as one voice.



**Ms. Mary Robinson, Chair of The Elders:**

I am particularly concerned by the risk for health and livelihoods of girls, at risk of child pregnancy and child marriage. 2020 was a year of irreversible setbacks for girl rights. This constitutes a massive denial of human rights.

Much has been said about the importance of sport for the well being of the children. But there is a strong need to give greater attention to addressing the issue of child abuses in sport, including sexual and physical abuses. I encourage the implementation of the recommendations made to the HRC at its 40<sup>th</sup> session by the Special Rapporteur, following her thematic report on the sale and sexual exploitation of children in the context of sport.

**Afshan Khan, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, UNICEF (concluding remarks):**

Realizing children's rights and the SDGs will not be possible without taking children into account, including into decision making and meaningful participation. Children must have the opportunity to speak up, not only to claim their rights but also to engage in solutions.

Child rights approach: right of every child to express their views freely. This right is often neglected, especially for the most marginalized children.

*AFTERNOON MEETING – The gaps and barriers affecting children. Follow-up on commitments.*

**Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children:**

All 17 SDGs touch children's rights and provide a solid background for the elimination of all forms of violence against children. We cannot hope to end violence against children if the SDGs related to poverty, education, hunger, health, justice, gender, social inclusion, climate change and building peaceful societies are not fulfilled.

Even before Covid-19, we were not on track to implement SDGs by 2030. The pandemic and its mitigation measures have increased the risk for children to be exposed to violence. It has also impacted the mental health of children worldwide. We need a right based approach for the implementation of the 2030 agenda.

**Claudia, Member of the Network of Children's and Adolescent Correspondents of the Americas and the Caribbean from the Inter-American Institute of the Child (RED CORIA DEL IIN-OEA):**

We need to take action to put an end to violence and child labour, to teen pregnancies and to many other issues we see increasing instead of reducing. Top priorities in implementing SDGs: creating institutional balance, addressing inequality and corruption, improving economic system around the world. Ensuring quality education.

Children must be taken into account in all UN consultations. Children must be heard in each country. Children need global solutions on environment and education. For children to participate into decision making, they need structures in which they can participate and make their voices heard. We call upon world leaders to empower us.

**Mr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (video message):**

The link between SDGs and international human rights law and child rights is clearer now than before. The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) also recognizes the critical role of children's participation. We urge States to integrate a child-based approach in their implementation plans for the 2030 agenda.

An important aspect of the rights of the child is the multidimensional poverty of children. There is a concern that measurement of child poverty focuses on indicators easily qualifiable. But other child rights aspects cannot be really measured. How do we know that no one is left behind without a data?

**Mr. Bruce Adamson, Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (video message):**

We see a lack of children's participation into decision making. We should build back and realize the SDGs in a way that puts children's rights at the center. In recent times, we highlighted the importance of children's rights impact assessments. If done correctly, a rights-based approach can result into better decision making.

The SDGs must translate into concrete actions. The Scottish parliament will integrate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law. Now a right will become a law.



## **STATES, UN AGENCIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY TAKING THE FLOOR**

**46 delegations** took the floor during the annual discussion on the rights of the child.

The vast majority of delegations taking the floor agreed with the panellists about the interconnectedness of the SDGs and the rights of the child. For delegations taking the floor, the rights of the child are at the heart of the SDGs. To fulfil the rights of the child is to fulfil the SDGs and vice-versa. This is another proof of the importance of the rights of the child. In the same vein, states highlighted that a child-rights based approach could be a good solution to monitor the progress in implementing the SDGs.

Delegations deplored the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the rights of the child, world-wide. The pandemic is having a devastating impact on education. Child marriage, unwanted pregnancies, female genital mutilations and online abuses are on the rise due to lockdowns. We also observe forced labour and rise in poverty.

It was made clear by states taking the floor that children should be recognised as rights holders. Furthermore, their meaningful participation in decision making and into the building back of the societies after Covid-19 was also an important point raised by delegations. Children must be put at the center of recovery efforts and policy making.

Several states also mentioned their national efforts in the implementation of the SDGs with respect to children's rights. States also highlighted their participation and contribution to the UN human rights mechanisms linked to the rights of the child, including their implementation of recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

### **Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (46 delegations):**

*Estonia (on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries), European Union, Croatia, Luxembourg, Pakistan, Cameroon, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Libya, Maldives, Thailand, India, Uruguay, Vietnam, Chad, Georgia, United Arab Emirates, Niger, Poland, Malta, Qatar, Latvia (on behalf of Nordic-Baltic countries), Barbados (on behalf of the CARICOM), Canada (on behalf of States Members of OIF), European Union, Montenegro, Hungary, Ukraine, Moldova, Marshall Islands, Gabon, Republic of Korea, Bulgaria, Timor-Leste, Greece, Burkina Faso, Nepal, Fiji, Sudan, Israel, Iraq, Russian Federation, Indonesia, Bahrain.*

**12 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** and **2 UN Agencies** took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue.

As the other speakers during the annual discussion, NGOs highlighted the interconnection between the rights of the child and the SDGs. Civil society emphasized the importance of empowering children and putting them at the centre of policy making.

Regarding the impact of Covid-19, NGOs as well as UN Agencies deplored the terrible impact of Covid-19 on children's rights, including on the right to education, on child labour, child poverty, rise in sexual violence.

It was underlined that desegregated data was important to track and demonstrate progress in upholding children's rights and the SDGs.

### **UN Agencies (2) and Non-Governmental Organizations (12) taking the floor:**

*UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), Defensoria del Pueblo de la Nacion of Argentina, World Vision International, Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, China Family Planning Association, Chinese Association for International Understanding, China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, Edmund Rice International Limited, Child Rights Connect, Consortium for Street Children, Save the Children International, Plan International, International Planned Parenthood Federation.*

Watch the full morning meeting: [Click Here](#)

Watch the full afternoon meeting: [Click Here](#)