

Annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming

Thirty years of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: challenges and opportunities

24 February 2020, 16h-18h, Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva

OPENING STATEMENTS

H.E. Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations

- Urged all member States to take action to implement the recommendations of the Global Study of Children Deprived of Liberty, which was mandated by General Assembly Resolution 69/157
- SGD 1 end poverty as a key priority for the 74TH session of the GA Children experience poverty differently to adults, and as such the President of the GA urges all Member States to pay due attention to their specific needs
- highlighted the importance of children's education also as a priority of the General Assembly, as enshrined in Article 28 of the CRC. Education is essential. To reduce inequalities, we must seek to mainstream this right throughout social protection policies and the development of infrastructure à 'available and accessible' education as set out in the Convention
- Importance of ensuring art 29 "the development and respect for the natural environment" à climate affects this generation of young people more than any generation in the thirty years since the adoption of the Convention à environmental changes threat children rights and have impact on their lives Need for actions.
- In preparation of the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the UN, it is appropriate to put children's rights as a priority
"We must mainstream the rights of the child into not just our work, but our consciousness. I pledge to do just this, throughout the 74th session of the General Assembly"

Ms. Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

- The mainstreaming children rights- the UNCRC is the most widely ratified Human Rights treaty in the history but continue to be a challenge in practice. The policies of many States, and even some international and regional organisations, need to better integrate and promote the needs and rights of children –particularly of girls.
- The Security Council pays attention to child protection during peacekeeping operations.
- In many countries, monitoring and reporting mechanisms, managed by country-based task forces co-led by UNICEF and UN Resident Coordinators, aim to provide timely information on six grave children's rights violations
- The Human Rights Council has integrated children's rights into its work through resolutions, panels and expert reporting. Ex. Commission of Inquiry in Syria, experts on Yemen, Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, Investigative bodies Burundi, South Sudan and Opt
- Child rights have been also integrated in core work of the OHCHR. All colleagues particularly the ones working on field take into account the 4 principles: Non-discrimination, Best interest, right to live, survive and development and right to be heard.
- Invitation to share good practices and highlights challenges faced, in order to improve accessibility and impact of the UN system for children.

Moderator: Mr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

- There are a lot of examples on mainstreaming of children rights' importance such as in the context of development aid.
- Mainstreaming requires a comprehensive approach
- Need for more comprehensive understanding and child well-being, go behind civil and political rights and social and cultural rights
- UN is mentioned in the CRC because the critical role it has

The panel discussion was guided by the following overarching questions:

1. How can United Nations entities better support Member States in building capacity to operationalize the general measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child?
2. In which ways can the United Nations system empower children so they can exercise and claim their human rights?
3. Which measures can be taken to ensure that children's views, including those of children who are most at risk of being left behind, inform the actions of the UN?

PANELISTS

Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support

Mr. Fernandez shared perspectives on ways peacebuilding support has mainstreamed child rights, and what more can we do collectively.

As a key component of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is supporting interventions that promote a child rights-based approach to programming at the field level and contribute to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4 areas in which the PBF has supported children:

1. Creating space for **inclusive participation** for political and peacebuilding process. Children have an active role in mobilizing their communities and give their perspective. For ex. In Gambia, Kyrgyzstan, Guinea
2. Children in **disengagement and re-integration processes**. Protecting children into peace processes. For ex. in Somalia, Colombia
3. Protection of **children's rights**. Applying Human Rights framework to peacebuilding is fundamental as it helps to identify those being "left behind"
Ex. Cote d'Ivoire
4. **Transformative role of education** for the foundation and construction of a peaceful society. Education help to promote a culture of respect for human rights and inclusion.
Ex. Northern Mali, Guatemala, Colombia

He highlighted the Important role of youth in peace and securityà remarkable ways young people are contributing to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, which was recognized in Security Council resolutions 2250 and 2419.

Investing in young people capacity is a critical strategy to go toward a preventive approach.

The ongoing 2020 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture offers an opportunity to build on good practices and lessons learned worldwide, and to put forward recommendations that bring the United Nations pillars together more coherently and efficiently around this objective.

Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab, Deputy Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO)

The **child/adolescent's health agenda** remains unfinished from a HR perspective as well from a public health perspective. The progress on achieving the child-related SDGs has stalled. Last week's report by the WHO/UNICEF/Lancet Commission, entitled "*A future for the world's children?*", highlights new and emerging challenges, including: 1. Environmental threats to children's health, well-being and 2. Commercial threats through the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages, alcohol, tobacco and gambling, and through the unregulated collection and use of children's data and images. (One of the report's recommendations is the development of an Optional Protocol to the CRC on regulating the marketing of harmful products to children).

The number of obese children increased; child maltreatment remains a global problem. Children vulnerable in armed conflicts and refugees' settings are also a big challenge. Urgent need to prioritize children and adolescent's health if we want to achieve the SDGs (This includes meeting the needs of older children and adolescents) by:

- Addressing the challenges posed by climate change and air pollution (**environmental degradation**)
- Reducing the **marketing of unhealthy products** to children

Ms. Afshan Khan, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Children's rights continue to be limited by a range of barriers (climate change, migration, natural disasters, outbreaks etc.) In every emergency child rights are the most affected, even during conflicts, armed violence is not acceptable to erode children rights.

2 main areas of needs to improve children rights:

1. **Nutrition**à we call on governments to invest in large-scale nutrition programmes and food systems to improve the quality and availability of good nutrition, and to take action to end marketing practices of unhealthy products that target children.
2. **climate change**à children highlighted that one of their biggest concerns is climate change and they demand for their rights to healthy environment and safe future to be implemented. we cannot discuss human rights without discussing children rights.
We call on the countries of the world to treat climate change like the emergency that it is, and place children's rights at the center of their national action plans.

STATES

- **Belgium – armed conflict:** OPSC and OPAC as the basis for the protection of children's rights against violence, abuse and exploitation. Children's rights as a priority for Belgium, the national commission for children's rights is very invested and in 2018 Belgium has shared its good practices with the CRC Committee.

- **Brazil – violence against children:** priority of children rights by developing several initiatives. Guarantee the interest of children in all regions of the country. The country is committed to end violence against children, need to be eradicated worldwide. Need to properly implement the CRC. To address violence against children, Brazil has launched a major pact for children.
- **Mozambique – education:** Since the adoption of the CRC, Mozambique has designed a political program to increase children’s wellbeing in Mozambique, focusing on free access to education and better access to quality education. There has been an increasing in access to primary care and health care in all the regions. Adoption of a law to prevent early marriage and reviewing of the family law, particularly access to education for pregnant girls.
- **South Africa:** The CRC was the first international treaty to be signed by democratic South Africa in 1995. Regular review on the implementation of laws and policies to address the gaps in protection of children’s rights. Reforms in the juvenile justice system, participation to the UN the global study on children deprived of liberty, one of the first country abolishing corporal punishments. Despite efforts, key priorities remain such as early childhood, violence against children; nutrition, children’s care, quality education and life skills programs.
- **Namibia:** the international community is failing in promoting the Rights of the child, need to do better. Children are particularly victims of conflicts and need to be protected from recruitment and use in armed conflicts. Children in armed conflicts don’t enjoy their rights. Violence against children also remain a challenge such as harmful cultural practices, rape and domestic violence. Need to eliminate the root causes of violence against children.
- **EU - child participation:** The EU promotes a zero-tolerance policy on child labour and eradication of forced labour through trade arrangements, action on global supply chains, and increased support to global partnerships. The EU also support children affected by Armed conflict, poverty, natural and man-made disasters, and displacement. On September 2019, together with UNICEF, the EU has launched a global campaign to celebrate the anniversary called #TheRealChallenge, aiming at creating a space for children's active participation and empowering them to speak up, contributing to the fulfilment of their right to be heard and to express their views.
 - ➔ Need to create more space for children to participate and to demonstrate how their involvement on matters that concern them contributes to the realisation of their rights.
 - ➔ The EU renews its long-standing commitment to the full implementation of the CRC. Even though the EU is not a party to the Convention, is responsible for its implementation.
- **Portugal on behalf of Portuguese speaking countries (CPLP):** commitment to protect and promote the rights of all children and young people, in accordance with applicable international standards as a fundamental issue on the CPLP agenda.
- **Qatar on behalf of Arabic states:** The CRC was a milestone, a very important UN convention used by many countries and a reference in the protection for the rights of the child. Protecting children rights is crucial in the context of HR, and thus, they have adopted strategies in order to uphold rights of all citizens including children. Adoption of individual measures to strengthen the rights of the child. Qatar also denounced serious violations of Children rights

in the Opt by the Israeli forces and said that it is essential to help Palestinian people, especially children.

- **Uruguay on behalf of GRULAC -GPs in all national policies + more efforts to make sure that the UN reaches children and gets their views:** Millions of children have seen a progression of their rights. The topic is important, and they recognize the role of the UN specially with his technical assistance. Commitment to respect the principles of the CRC, particularly the principle of the best interest of the child but recognition that more efforts need to be made.
- **Malta/group of friends of CAAC –Involvement of children in armed conflicts:** children living in conflict zones and without the enjoyment of their HR. Deeply concerned about the scale and severity of the grave human rights violations and abuses committed against children in the context of armed conflicts, specially concerned on the repercussion of attacks against schools, which can be long lasting, risking the future of entire generations. Need to take further steps to bring all perpetrators to justice. The states are urged to bear in mind that in armed conflicts, children should be regarded primarily as victims and treated as such, to focus on rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups, and to ensure that international juvenile justice standards and due process are applied to any criminal proceedings involving a child. children detention should only be used as a last resort measure.
 - ➔ Further steps to make use of international UN mechanisms for accountability of perpetrators
- **Barbados on behalf CARICOM group in Geneva- guidelines for child rights officers:** since the Convention was adopted, significant progress has been made in the protection of children in the Caribbean. At the regional level, CARICOM has developed Guidelines to provide practical guidance to early childhood officers. The guidelines focus on the education and development aspects of early childhood experience in different settings (ex. Preschools and care services). CARICOM states support multilateral coordinated action, based on international law, to find durable solutions for children affected by war and child migrants.
- **Burkina on behalf of group of African States:** the African group made efforts since the adoption of the general comments 5 of the CRC regarding the mainstreaming of the Rights of the child, however it remains concerns of the persistent challenges which undermine the rights of children. Need to move for action, acceleration to achieve the goal of the CRC and the SDG. This year is the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the African Chart on the rights of welfare of the child, and this is an opportunity for stronger commitment that child rights are a priority. What's the impact of the budget cuts to the HRs pillars of the UN on the implementation of the CRC?
- **Pakistan on behalf of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)-child participation:** Emphasized that parents and primary caregivers play a crucial role in ensuring children's physical and emotional security and healthy upbringing and consider that the family environment has a strong impact on the cognitive and social development of the child--> the OIC adopted the Legal Framework for the Establishment of ISESCO Forum for Children of the Islamic World to raise the awareness of children about the values of dialogue, solidarity,

democracy and citizenship and about the necessity of their involvement in discussing their issues and promoting their rights and situation.

- **Lithuania on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries:** The Nordic-Baltic countries have made the CRC part of their legislation. They believe that stronger political commitment is necessary to make sure that no child is left behind. The role of the United Nations bodies and agencies is therefore crucial in helping States to meet their obligations, hold them accountable and ensure the coherence of joint actions. Empowering children by ensuring access to quality education is one of the key elements for a good future for the child especially girls.
 - ➔ Education also provides children with knowledge and tools to exercise and claim their rights. Engaging children in policy- and decision-making processes that concern them, is the key to ensuring the standards put forward by the CRC.
- **Vietnam on behalf of ASEAN:** The rights of the child have been at the center of numerous ASEAN instruments to ensure better access to quality care and education, better protection from violence and abuse, from trafficking in children, etc. Cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations has begun since the inception of the Association and has continued to grow → Last year, during the event commemorating 30th Anniversary of the CRC held in Bangkok, ASEAN and UNICEF launched a joint report on Children in ASEAN.
 - ➔ Since 2018, ASEAN has been organizing an **annual Dialogue with the Committee** on the Rights of the Child on the General Comments of the CRC to facilitate the strengthened implementation of the CRC at the regional and national levels.
- **Greece:** Alignment to the statement of the EU. Call for more mainstreaming and empowerment of children. Greece attached great importance to childhood which the State has the duty to protect, Greece's commitments at the international level are reflected in national policies and legislations. Enrolment procedures are putted in place to ensure that also refugees and migrant children have access to school. Empower children as right holders is fundamental.
- **Slovenia:** crucial importance to mainstream rights of the child across the UN. Slovenia is raising this issue in all UN fora and further reinforce this by organizing events or leading on initiatives such as the Group of Friends of Rights of the Child in Geneva. Need for more collaboration among UN entities and beyond, need to find ways to more effectively address also crosscutting issues - such as the right to safe, clean and sustainable environment or ICTs (She refers to discussions with children held in Slovenia for the 30th CRC anniversary).
- **Indonesia:** Indonesia is steadfast in our efforts to create policies and programs to protect children from violence, working towards the achievement of SDGs target → comprehensive and holistic policy by: 1. empowering family's role in ensuring children's rights, 2. decreasing the level of child's mortality by enhancing mothers and children healthcare, 3. improving the equitable distribution of quality education services, and providing financial assistance for poor children and raising family income, through 12 years of education program for all children.

- **Tunisia:** importance on right to education, gender equality and ending child abuse. Children are victims to social and economic exclusion and exploitation; more efforts need to be made given the widespread of conflicts and terrorism. Efforts to find peaceful solutions to conflicts and prevent children to grown in a conflict environment, provide better condition to advance children's rights.
- **Lesotho:** significant progress in the implementation of the CRC with adoption of national policies and laws. Introduction of children's rights in school curricula. Still a lot of challenges as child marriages and violence against children. How can policy makers better structure the administration and the government based on the best interest of the child?
- **Burkina Faso:** on behalf of the African groups. Concerned by persistent challenges which undermined children and their qualitative transformation in the society. The African group believe is time to move from words to actions. The African group would wish to know about the speakers budgeting crisis affecting the human rights pillars.
- **Nepal:** reiterate its commitment to the promotion and protection of rights of every child. Commitment to end child marriages and child labour. Nepal collaboration with the UN continues in expanding literacy, increasing enrolment of children into schools, reducing dropouts and improving girl's education. These efforts have contributed to the implementation of SDGs and bringing positive changes in the human and social development indicators
- **Ecuador:** mainstream children's right around the system. Ecuador the first country in Latin America and third globally to ratify the CRC. Ecuador has also ratified all the 3 Ops. Some progress as increasing of school enrollment, reduction of poverty and child mortality but still many challenges so need to strengthen the State's capacity.
- **Angola:** Children are vulnerable and a priority for the Angolan government. They need to live in a safe and peaceful environment so in combatting violence against children Angola has launched a hotline that will be available from April 2020. Another big challenge is trafficking of children. there is a website with lot of information and a lot services have been putted in place. Social action for gender equality. Angola is deeply committed to implement the CRC in connection with civil societyà multisectoral approach.

STATEMENTS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY:

Aid Organization, Child Rights Connect, Iuventum e.V., Plan International, Inc., Save the Children International, World Vision International

Child rights connect: This panel is an opportunity to strengthen UN focus on children. Persistent challenges and most of the decisions are taken without children views even when consulted they are not taken seriously, and they are not a priority for many stakeholders. Children Human Rights Defenders need to be included. Need to do more for a common understanding of child rights mainstreaming and its practical implementation. Mainstreaming require the proactive and systematic application of a child rights-based approach. This approach encompasses the inclusion of all children,

empowering all children to exercise their rights, strengthening state capacity, recognizing children as key actors of civil society and as important HRDs. Call on the UN to fulfil on his promise of a child rights-based approach, identify systemic gaps and assure the implementation.

Save the Children: Need to put children's rights, child protection, and gender equality at the centre of all humanitarian operations, peace processes, development initiatives, and accountability efforts. Mainstreaming children's rights in emergency settings requires practical actions. The following six areas require joint action from Member States, the UN, and civil society: 1. prioritise child rights, 2. develop further guidance on child participation, 3. adequately fund child protection in emergencies, 4. strengthen coordination on child protection standards, 5. ensure dedicated gender-responsive child-protection capacity and expertise and 6. Address the root causes of conflict and integrate conflict sensitivity in programming to maximize the positive impact for children.

Plan International: We cannot achieve the SDGs without realising the rights of all children. Children should be front and centre in our approach, empowered to participate in fora where decisions are made that affect their lives. Call on the UN and governments:

- To apply a gender-responsive and age-sensitive, rights-based approach to achieving Agenda 2030;
- To track and demonstrate progress for all children by routinely collecting data on every child, especially those most left behind, particularly girls; and
- To work in partnership across the UN system and civil society, with the meaningful participation of children in all their diversity.

World Vision: As the leading United Nations entity for the human rights pillar, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights plays a key role in leading children's rights mainstreaming. Children's rights should be a priority within the Office and in its work to mainstream human rights within all United Nations pillars. Need to Ensure that the next plan is informed by children views and include a spotlight on children as a distinct group, provide specific guidance on and child rights-based approach and Demonstrates through adequate funding the political will to recognize child rights as human rights. How can the United Nations Children's Fund best support the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other agencies in the mainstreaming of children's rights with all United Nations pillars?

No NHRI'S Statements was delivered. This is the first time that no NHRIs speak at a HLPM.

Concluding Remarks from the panellists:

Ms Khan, UNICEF: UNICEF see an investment in children, the CRC is the basis of all UNICEF work and to achieve the rights of children, in order to arrive also to the most disadvantaged ones, there is need to support access to justice, empower children and their rights to participation. Moreover, all stakeholders need to work together. Need to enable the CRC to sufficiently report and conduct their work. Recognize the very important role of mainstreaming in activities of the UN. How do we work behind the UN, to have much more participation of young people? Need to create space in institutions to make sure children voices are heard and children can give meaningful contribution within these structures.

Ms Jakab,WHO: we have to do much more to promote and protect the rights of the children. We need a coherent narrative to guide our work. Intersectoral work can take very forms but without that there can't be any progress of children rights. Need to do much more to place children at the center, we need comprehensive national framework to address all the challenges and link that to the political declarations adopted by most countries and all the political commitments. New challenges: climate changes and the marketing of unhealthy products and others dangerous practise. This imply that Children are heard, and their views taken to consideration. The WHO will Continue to mainstream the right of the children in his work and collaborate with other UN agencies.

Mr Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Peacebuilding support: In the peace building perspective, is important to address root causes of inequality, exclusion, discrimination for the promotion of children's rights and in order to make sure no child is left behind. The Secretary General has launched a call to action for human rights which provides 7 important principles to guide the work of the UN in strengthening the Rights of the child. He highlighted also the importance of the UPR as a critical tool for States engagement in addressing the gaps in child rights. In 2020 review of the peace building architecture and this is an opportunity to build this review on practices and lessons learned and develop recommendations to bridge the 3 UN pillars to better mainstreaming Children's rights.

Moderator, Benyam Mezmur CRC member: mainstreaming means that Children are protected at the ground level, shared responsibility to fulfil the HR of children at all level. He mentioned that children's rights are enshrined in the international human rights protocols on the subject. He said that when it came to children's rights, terminology is important. He emphasized that the human rights of the child and children's rights were often mentioned by States as separate things, but they are not. It's important to maintain a child-based assessment for every piece of work the Committee did. comprehensive understanding of the child is critical, need to change the attitudes. He welcomed the States for talking about taking action and not just talk about actions → importance of adopting the the right approach.