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**Human Rights Council 43rd session**

**Annual high-level panel discussion on mainstreaming human rights in the United Nations system**

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

**Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**

Geneva, 24 February 2020

Distinguished President of the General Assembly,

Distinguished President of the Human Rights Council,

Excellencies,

Colleagues, Friends,

I welcome the opportunity to speak on this essential topic: mainstreaming children’s rights.

We have seen many celebrations in the past year to mark the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although this is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history, achieving the aims of the Convention and its Optional Protocols continues to be a challenging endeavour.

Most States now have laws that specifically protect children’s rights and many have also established programmes to fulfil those rights in practise. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, who have done so much to advance these achievements.

However, 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 establishment of the Offices of the **Special Representatives of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict,** and **on Violence against Children,** has given added impetus to these issues. The **Security Council** has included emphasis on child protection in the mandates of **all peacekeeping operations since 2001**. And 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: killing or maiming; recruitment by armed forces or armed groups; attacks on schools or hospitals; sexual violence; abduction; and denial of humanitarian access to children.

The Human Rights Council has integrated children’s rights into its work through resolutions, panels and expert reporting. Most investigations set up by the Council include a child’s rights expert, and pay close attention to child protection issues.

Many of you are aware of the shocking report issued by the Commission of Inquiry on **Syria** spanning eight years of impact of the conflict on children, which has been issued as a conference room paper. The Group of Eminent Experts on **Yemen** has also reported on sexual violence, child recruitment, attacks against schools and hospitals; and killing and injuring of children. The Fact-Finding Mission on **Myanmar** has found extensive sexual violence against girls. Investigative bodies on **Burundi**, **South Sudan** and protests in the **Occupied Palestinian Territory** have also issued findings on violations of children’s rights. Child rights are also integrated at the core of all the work that is done by my Office.

I am convinced that this increasing emphasis by many UN bodies has important impact on children’s lives. A clear example is the recent decision by **Bangladesh** to enable Rohingya refugee children to have access to formal education, and UNICEF’s efforts, in particular, to advocate this important advance.

All UN colleagues, and particularly field colleagues, have an important opportunity to contribute to child rights. We need to prioritise the mainstreaming of the Convention’s four core principles: non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and the right to be heard. We also need to do no harm – a principle which is perhaps particularly relevant to the conduct of peacekeepers, and to the funding practises of development banks and other institutions which may unwittingly impact the rights of local communities, including girls and boys.

I invite our distinguished panellists to share good practices and to highlight the concrete challenges and opportunities that your entities have encountered. All of us will benefit from pragmatic recommendations that can enhance the protection, promotion and fulfilment of children’s rights, and improve the accessibility and impact of the UN system for children everywhere.

Thank you Madam President.