



Days of General Discussion by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Information for children's rights defenders

WHAT ARE THE DAYS OF GENERAL DISCUSSION?

Although not mentioned in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Convention), Rule 75 of the rules of procedure (CRC/C/4/Rev.1) allows the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (Committee) to hold general discussions on one specific article of the Convention or related subjects.

The purpose of such Days of General Discussion (DGD) is to foster a deeper understanding of the contents and implications of the Convention as they relate to specific articles or topics.

The DGD is a one day meeting which takes place from 10:00 to 13:00 and from 15:00 to 18:00. However, the DGD is much more than just a meeting and can be a unique opportunity to engage relevant stakeholders, including children, around a specific topic through worldwide consultations and other activities.

HOW OFTEN AND WHERE DO THEY TAKE PLACE?

The Committee holds the DGDs every two years during its September session, usually the second Friday of the session.

The DGD is usually hosted in Palais des Nations, in Geneva, Switzerland, although in the past other venues have been used as well.

HOW ARE THE THEMES CHOSEN?

Ideas for possible themes come from Committee members or UN agencies, NGOs, academies, and other relevant partners. The Committee publicizes a call for proposals on its website and through Child Rights Connect. Committee members decide on the theme to be discussed in a private meeting and communicate their decision at the closing of the May-June session of the year before the DGD.

HOW CAN I SUGGEST A THEME AND WHAT DOES IT IMPLY?

Proposals need to be prepared based on the [Committee's guiding parameters](#) which outline the specific responsibilities and tasks of the partner organization.

Interested stakeholders must send their proposal to the Secretariat of the Committee (crc@ohchr.org) according to the deadline publicized in the call for proposals.

The selected partner organization has to coordinate with the Committee's Working Group (a group of 5-6 members committed to actively prepare the DGD) and the Committee Secretariat.

HOW IS THE DGD STRUCTURED?

The format of the DGD varies depending on the topic and the stakeholders involved. Once the DGD concept note has been published, the Committee, through its DGD Working Group, builds the agenda together with the partner organization.

The DGD generally begins with a plenary session followed by working groups and a closing plenary session, which includes a report back from the working group meetings and general conclusions from Committee members.

There is a two-hour lunch break (1:00-3:00) during which side events, such as exhibitions, films or discussions on a related theme, might take place.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE AND IN WHAT WAYS?

Before the DGD

All interested stakeholders can submit confidential or public written information to the Committee before the DGD. Children can send any types of materials, including reports, videos, drawings, etc. The public submissions will be published on the Committee's webpage.

The call for submissions is a unique opportunity to conduct consultations with children and other relevant stakeholders on local, national and regional levels. Anyone can seize this opportunity and use the DGD to open up a debate and undertake awareness raising and advocacy activities.

During the DGD

The DGD is open to any interested stakeholder. Representatives from governments, other human rights treaty bodies, UN agencies, NGOs, national human rights institutions, academics and other experts and individual children can participate in the DGD.

The DGD is usually webcasted and therefore people can watch the DGD from home and interact online if remote participation is available.

There might be other ways for engaging, depending on the concept of the DGD, such as for instance through DGD national hubs discussions.

After the DGD

All interested stakeholders can follow up using the DGD recommendations created by the Committee (see below).

HOW DO I REGISTER FOR THE DGD?

The number of participants is limited, usually to 150 participants. To attend the DGD, participants need to register and get an accreditation to access the UN buildings.

Guidelines for participants on registration are posted on the webpage dedicated to the event.

Priority is generally given on a first come, first served basis. Other criteria such as the number of people from the same organization, regional distribution or child participation may also be taken into account.

There is no registration fee but the Committee does not have any funding available for travel expenses.

HOW DO I PREPARE A WRITTEN SUBMISSION FOR THE DGD?

Guidelines for submissions are posted on the webpage dedicated to the event. It is important to prepare the submissions based on the concept note and the related guidelines in order to provide relevant and accessible information.

Contributions must be submitted in one of the three working languages of the Committee (English, French and Spanish).

Submissions will not be translated by the United Nations.

CAN I MAKE A PRESENTATION DURING THE DGD?

The Committee welcomes oral contributions but requests that participants avoid making formal statements.

Time is extremely limited and interventions should be concise, constructive and relevant to the topics under discussion.

This is not the appropriate time or place to explain what an organization does or how it works. This information can be placed on tables set out for this purpose in the conference room.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE DGD?

Read all the relevant documents published on the event page, including the concept note and the written submissions.

If you are a child or supporting a child to participate, contact Child Rights Connect who will be able to provide you with specific information and technical assistance. We will also inform you if there are any

training or briefing/debriefing activities planned for children. These are great opportunities to familiarize with some Committee members, the venue, and meet with other children before and after the DGD.

The DGD is a good opportunity to networking. Plan some additional time before the DGD to meet with individuals who may be coming to Geneva or who are based in Geneva.

ARE THERE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION?

The Committee is currently drafting specific working methods on child participation in DGDs. The working methods will be adopted at the May-June 2018 session of the Committee.

These will build on the existing child participation guidelines of the Committee, including the General Comment 12 on the right to be heard and the Working Methods for Children's Participation in CRC Reporting.

WHAT IS THE OUTCOME OF THE DGD?

The Committee adopts a series of recommendations for States Parties and other stakeholders that are included in the final report which is posted on the event's webpage.

Recommendations may call for studies to be done by the UN General Assembly (Study on Children in Armed Conflict; Study on Violence against Children).

Recommendations may make proposals for the drafting of new international instruments (Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict; International Standards for the Protection and Alternative Care of Children without Parental Care).

Written and oral input from the discussions has also contributed to the subsequent drafting of General Comments on similar topics (HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child; implementing child rights in early childhood; the rights of children with disabilities).

The DGD has also been used as an opportunity to strengthen the strategic collaboration between the Committee and other regional and international Human Rights mechanisms, such as the UN Special Rapporteur on Environment for the 2016 DGD.

HOW CAN THE RECOMMENDATIONS BE USED IN MY WORK?

The DGD recommendations can strengthen national advocacy arguments and activities and should be brought to the attention of as many actors as possible on national level, especially children.

Suggestions should be made by all those concerned as to how the recommendations of the Committee can be followed-up and implemented at the national level in order to improve the situation of children.

ROLE OF CHILD RIGHTS CONNECT

Child Rights Connect provides advice to children's rights defenders on how to effectively engage in DGDs, at all stages of the process (from the time of submitting a proposal to the follow-up).

We are involved in the realization of all the Committee’s DGDs, together with OHCHR and UNICEF, and are therefore able to collect and share good practices.

We advocate for effective and meaningful participation of children in DGDs and provide specific advice and support on that, including to children themselves.

We also submit proposals for themes to the Committee and take up the role of partner organization, such in the case of the 2018 DGD on “Protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders”.

Information on DGDs can be found on the Committee’s [webpage](#) as well as on our [website](#).

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