

Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child

Theme: Protecting the rights of the child in humanitarian situations

Concept note (as of 5 March 2018)

Date and venue: 5 March 2018, 9 - 11 a.m. and 4 - 6 p.m., Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva
(will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)

Objectives: To gather specific experts including States, United Nations experts, humanitarian actors, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies, national human rights institutions and children's ombudspersons in order to bridge the gaps between the human rights and humanitarian community to ensure that the needs and rights of children are upheld in humanitarian situations.

This will be done through:

- Listening to children about their rights and needs in humanitarian situations and the recommendations they have to ensure better respect, protection and promotion of children's rights in these contexts.
- Exploring the articulation between existing humanitarian and human rights legal frameworks for children's rights in humanitarian situations, and to deepen the understanding of their interconnections and challenges being faced.
- Offering practice examples and lessons learned from different levels on meeting children's rights in humanitarian situations and evaluating the particular impacts on children and remaining challenges.
- Assessing current accountability mechanisms at different levels to children in humanitarian situations and sharing examples to determine how can States and the international community can be more accountable to children in humanitarian situations.

Morning panel (9 - 11 a.m.) **How can we meet children's needs and rights in humanitarian situations? Practices and lessons from different levels.**

Chair: H.E. Mr. Vojislav Šuc, President of the Human Rights Council

Opening statement: Ms. Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

Moderator: H.E. Mr. Carl Hallergard, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the European Union to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

Panellists and their themes:

- Ms. Helen Durham, Director of International Law and Policy, International Committee of the Red Cross

What is the articulation between existing humanitarian and human rights legal frameworks for children's rights in humanitarian situations and how are they being challenged?

- Mr. Sikander Khan, Director of the Geneva Office of Emergency Programmes, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

What are the impacts of humanitarian crises on children's rights? Examples from the ground in different countries and contexts.

- Mr. Alejandro Gamboa, National Director, Plan International Colombia

Comparative country examples of and a gender perspective to building resilience and strengthening preventative approaches with children in humanitarian responses.

- **Ms. Monica Ferro**, Director of the Geneva Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
What are some practices and lessons learned from the work of the United Nations Population Fund in respecting, protecting and promoting the human rights of children in emergencies and in advancing gender equality?

Afternoon panel (4 - 6 p.m.)	How can States and the international community be more accountable to children in humanitarian situations?
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Chair:	H.E. Ms. Marta Maurás , Vice-President and Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council
Moderator:	H.E. Mr. Ricardo González Arenas , Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
Panellists and their themes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Gehad Madi, Member, Committee on the Rights of the Child <i>An overview of children’s rights in humanitarian situations from the perspective of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and how this treaty body is monitoring the obligations of States to children in humanitarian situations.</i> • Mr. Nicolas Gérard, Head of the Monitoring and Reporting Team, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict <i>Monitoring and reporting on grave violations committed against children from the perspective of the Special Representative mandate.</i> • Mr. Justin Byworth, Global Lead for Disaster Management, World Vision International <i>Examples of how civil society is acting to hold States to account in different humanitarian settings and at different levels, including situations of natural disasters, armed conflict and children on the move.</i> • Ms. Shahrzad Tadjbakhsh, Deputy Director, Division of International Protection, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) <i>How does UNHCR work at different levels to assist, protect and find solutions for displaced children? Offering examples from different country and humanitarian contexts regarding practices and recommendations to further the rights of children.</i>
Outcome:	Bridging the gaps between humanitarian and human rights discussions on the rights of children in humanitarian situations, informed, expert knowledge and examples will be shared to provide concrete suggestions on how States and the international community can become more accountable to children in humanitarian situations.
Mandate:	In its resolution 7/29 on the rights of the child adopted in March 2008, the Human Rights Council affirmed “its commitment to effectively integrate the rights of the child in its work and that of its mechanisms in a regular, systematic and transparent manner, taking into account specific needs of boys and girls” and “to incorporate into its programme of work sufficient time, at a minimum an annual full-day meeting, to discuss different specific themes on the rights of the child.” In this vein and on the basis of its resolution 34/16, the Human Rights Council decided to focus its next annual full-day meeting on the theme of “Protecting the rights of the child in humanitarian situations.”
Format:	The duration of both panel discussions will be strictly limited to two hours each. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including the opening statement, moderator comments, if any, panellist presentations, and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. Speaking time limits for the panellists and guests, if any, will be calculated based on the maximum one hour limit for the podium.

States and observers, including national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intervening from the floor will also have a maximum of one hour. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. The list of speakers for the discussion will be established at the beginning of the panel and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups will be moved to the beginning of the list.

The practice of having two slots for Member and observer States (2x12), NHRIs (2x1) and NGOs (2x2) will be maintained but the possibility for panellists to intervene in-between will depend entirely on the time used at the start of the panel.

Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

Background:

There are increasing situations of children living in and/or confronted by humanitarian situations around the world, directly resulting in flagrant violations of their fundamental rights. These include but are not limited to their right to survival, development, health, education and protection.

In humanitarian contexts such as natural disasters, children may face injury and disability, physical and sexual violence, psychosocial distress and risk of mental disorders. They may also be separated from their families or come into contact with the justice system. In conflict situations, children are subjected to grave violations, including recruitment and use by armed forces and groups, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction and denial of access to humanitarian assistance. In situations of displacement and migration, children are confronted to inadequate rescue efforts, mass deportation or punitive and arbitrary detention. Children in any humanitarian contexts are also more likely to be abused, economically exploited, sold, experience violence or have limited or no access to protection and services.

Children have the right to participate and be listened to in decision-making that affects their lives. They also can and do play an important role in their own protection and in their communities' response to an emergency. However, their perspectives and roles are often overlooked, especially in the chaos of an emergency when practical, organizational, cultural and ethical issues can create barriers to meaningful participation as defined by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child have made strong commitments and should ensure the respect, protection and promotion of children's rights including in situation of humanitarian emergencies, displacement or migration, natural disasters and armed conflict. Importantly, States should be held to account to their obligations to children in these contexts.

Discussions on the topic of children's rights in humanitarian situations currently tend to take place in silos of humanitarian and human rights actors and there is a need for greater recognition of the link between both agendas. It will therefore be very timely and critical to address humanitarian law from a children's rights perspective in these contexts: to discuss the impact of these situations on children's rights and their violations and how to ensure accountability to children.

Background documents:

[Human Rights Council resolution 34/16](#) of 24 March 2017, "Rights of the child: protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"

[Human Rights Council resolution 7/29](#) of 28 March 2008, "Rights of the child"

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on protecting the rights of the child in humanitarian situations (2018) ([A/HRC/37/33](#))