**WHO-EN-BW-H**

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**Deputy Director-General**

**43rd session of the Human Rights Council**

**Annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming**

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

*How does WHO mainstream children’s rights in its work?*

Monday, 24 February 2020, 16:00 to 18:00

Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Ms Tichy-Fisslberger, excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

* The child and adolescent health agenda remains very much unfinished, both from a public health and a human rights perspective.
* First, the good news:
  + 8 million more children and adolescents are surviving than they were 30 years ago;
  + 9 in 10 children born today receive appropriate childhood vaccines;
  + babies are more likely to be delivered with the assistance of a nurse or midwife, vastly increasing their chance of surviving those critical first days.
* However, progress on achieving the child-related SDGs has stalled:
  + In 2018, 5.3 million children did not live to see their 5th birthday. More than half of those deaths could have been prevented or treated through affordable interventions;
  + Around 1.1 million adolescents died in 2016, mostly from preventable or treatable causes;
  + Some 250 million children under 5 are at risk of not reaching their developmental potential;
  + Non-communicable diseases affecting children are rapidly increasing;
  + The number of obese children and adolescents increased from 11 million in 1975 to 124 million in 2016;
  + Child maltreatment remains a global problem, with at least 41 000 homicide deaths among children under 15;
  + Adolescents’ access to sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education remains a major challenge;
  + A high proportion of adolescent girls have experienced physical or sexual abuse and intimate partner violence and are particularly vulnerable in armed conflict and refugee settings.
* Last week’s report by the WHO/UNICEF/Lancet Commission, entitled *“A future for the world’s children?”*, highlights new and emerging challenges, including:
  + Environmental threats to children’s health, well-being, and indeed their very future; and
  + 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. I urge you to read the report and consider its recommendations.
* WHO views the CRC and other human rights instruments as the foundation for its normative and technical work on child and adolescent health. This is reflected in various WHO global initiatives, as well as tools and guidance for Member States.
* These initiatives include, among others, the Joint WHO-OHCHR High Level Working Group on the Health and Human Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents, the Every Newborn Action Plan, and the Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents and theGlobal plan of action to address interpersonal violence against women and children.
* Further, to facilitate equitable access to quality early childhood development, WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank, in collaboration with many other partners, have developed the Nurturing Care Framework, which explicitly recognizes the CRC as a foundation for its implementation.
* In addition, we have explicitly incorporated child rights principles and standards in new WHO global standards for high quality maternal, newborn and child health care.
* Throughout the development of these recent rights-based initiatives, standards and tools, we have ensured the full engagement of our UN and key civil society partners.
* And we will continue to do so, as we move from development to implementation at country level, and towards real-life application of a child rights-based approach.
* Let me reiterate: we must prioritize child and adolescent health if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
* This includes meeting the needs of older children and adolescents; we cannot stop caring about children once they turn 5.
* We must confront the challenges posed by climate change, air pollution, urbanization and environmental degradation.
* We must reduce the marketing of unhealthy products to children.
* With children, we can we build a future that protects their health, their rights, and their planet.
* Thank you.

626 words (5-7 mins suggested)