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# **Elections 2020**

# **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**

# **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

# **Human Rights Committee (HRCttee)**

# **Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

Questionnaire for candidates

Four UN Treaty Bodies (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Human Rights Committee (HRCttee) and Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)) will have elections organised in June 2020.

In order to strengthen the treaty bodies, the International Disability Alliance, Child Rights Connect, IWRAW Asia-Pacific and the Centre for Civil and Political Rights – as part of TB-Net, the NGO network on the UN Treaty Bodies – seek to promote quality, independence and diversity of treaty body membership through transparent and participators nomination and elections processes.

This questionnaire, which is sent to all nominated candidates and is based on the criteria set forth in the relevant treaties and in the GA Resolution 68/268, will enable all States and other stakeholders to better understand the skills, experiences and motivation of running candidates to CRPD, CEDAW, HRCttee, CRC in advance of the elections.

The written responses to the questionnaires will be made available on the website [www.untbelections.org](http://www.untbelections.org), while the video responses will be shared on a dedicated [YouTube page](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3AE1yyjFFbfT9G9lFKAaTQ).

*This initiative does not imply that we support or oppose any individual candidates.*

## Questions for all treaty bodies candidates

1. Name:

**Benoit Van Keirsbilck**

2. Nationality:

**Belgian**

3. Current position:

**Director of Defence for Children International Belgium**

**the chief editor of a Youth Law Journal**

**Member of the Interdisciplinary Center for the Rights of the Child (Academic research center)**

4. Are you currently holding or have you previously held any position on behalf of, or for, your Government (Executive branch) that may compromise your actual or perceived independence and impartiality? If so, please give details:

**No, I have worked for the Civil Society for all my carreer**

5. Please indicate any current or potential conflict of interest that may prevent you from exercising independence and impartiality in your work as a member of a UN treaty body:

**None**

6. Was the nomination process for your candidacy a transparent and participatory process? Was civil society or other relevant stakeholders involved?

**There is currently no open process for nomination to any of the Human Right Treaty bodies in Belgium. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has initiated the process and identified my candidature. I do have the support of the Belgian Civil Society (both French and Flemish speaking) and of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child.**

7. During your possible service as a Committee member, what other positions or professional activities do you intend to engage in?

**I will keep my current position in Defence for Children International Belgium, but not full time.**

8. The commitments as a Committee member are very time-consuming during and outside session time. Will you have the capacity to dedicate the necessary time to the work of the Committee?

**Yes, I plan to reduce my working time to allow me to dedicate the time and energy needed to fulfil all the duties of this position.**

9. What are the current and main challenges that you see for the treaty body system and what are your ideas for improvement?

**The challenges are many, both for the Committee on the Rights of the Child and for all the human rights treaty bodies, and each of them requires an appropriate response.**

**At this stage, I would like to highlight the following issues that I consider to be priorities:**

**1. If the United Nations and States take human rights seriously, it is essential to provide the monitoring mechanisms with the necessary means to carry out their mission;**

**2. All these mechanisms must, of course, seek on the one hand to coordinate even better among themselves and build on their complementarity, and on the other hand to formulate their recommendations in an even more operational manner;**

**3. States must attach greater importance to the Treaty Bodies and to the final recommendations, general comments and decisions taken by these bodies.**

**4. The United Nations system must also ensure that States receive the technical assistance they need to implement their commitments and follow up the recommendations and decisions of the Committees.**

**5. Each of the parties should remember that the monitoring system primarily aims at seeking ways and means to improve the implementation of human rights (in this case, children's rights); interactive dialogue should be used to jointly seek, with the involvement of all the actors concerned (including civil society and UN agencies), the best ways and means to achieve this.**

Link to your full resume:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1-vs7YSnJZRQxUek7WiBq0lHsKj4KEsML>

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**Questions for candidates to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

*Please provide responses that are as precise as possible and in no more than 200 words per question.*

1.What motivates you to be a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child? ([video option](https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/crc_guidelinesvideo_en.docx))

**I have always believed that the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as a guardian of the treaties, is crucial and brings, in complementarity with other monitoring and control mechanisms, concrete added value to a better respect for children's rights worldwide.**

**I have dedicated my entire career to children and to the respect of their rights and well-being. Although considerable progress has been made, this task remains fundamental today and must take into account the rapid changes our world is facing.**

**Having worked in the field, at the academic level, both in Belgium and in many parts of the world, and having thus been able to see the situation of children in a number of concrete ways, I believe that I have the experience required to participate actively in the work of the Committee.**

2. Taking into account the current composition and expertise of the Committee, what would it be your added value? ([video option](https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/crc_guidelinesvideo_en.docx))

* **Multidisciplinary training in social work, complemented by a legal and children's rights approach;**
* **35 years of professional experience, including 25 years working alongside children and families to help them exercise their rights;**
* **Experience as a trainer, journalist, public policy analyst and academic research and teacher;**
* **Experience in more than 30 countries. This allows me to take into account the very varied legal, social, economic and cultural contexts and constraints faced by States in order to adapt the approach to the national context;**
* **Participation in the drafting of regulatory texts (e.g. the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice) or research (e.g. the World Study on Children Deprived of their Liberty);**
* **An in-depth knowledge of the role and functioning of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations;**
* **Knowledge of the three working languages of the Committee.**

3. What do you think are the emerging issues and challenges in the implementation of the CRC and its Optional Protocols on a global scale as well as in your country/region?

**Many old challenges remain very topical today and require continued and sustained attention: the fight against poverty, access to quality education everywhere, children's participation in all issues that concern them, including public policies, access to justice and different ways of dealing with violations of children's rights. The majority of these challenges are included in the sustainable development goals.**

**The main emerging issues or major challenges at the global and regional levels are, in my view, the following:**

* **Children's rights and new technologies: how to reconcile the protection to which children are entitled with an emancipatory use of these tools;**
* **The impact of climate change on children's rights and the need to fundamentally rethink our world in the light of this major challenge;**
* **In relation to recent events: how to guarantee children's rights in the context of a global pandemic and ensure that children are at the centre of health policies;**
* **Respect for children's rights in the context of international migration: towards a necessary paradigm shift.**

4. What do you think are the areas where the Committee needs to strengthen international child rights standards?

**While there is no doubt that it is necessary to supplement international standards in certain areas, in particular for issues that did not arise, or not in the same way, when the Convention was adopted (I am thinking in particular of issues relating to artificial intelligence, surrogate mothers, technological developments), I believe that efforts should focus above all on the implementation of existing standards and their full application at national level.**

**On the other hand, work on the interpretation of standards through the drafting of general comments but also decisions in the context of individual communications must not only continue but also be stepped up. This is a way for the Committee to be able to provide concrete support to States through guidance in the elaboration of policies and their implementation.**

5. How do you envision the work of the CRC Committee in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals?

**Children and their rights are at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals. All aspects of the Committee's work therefore contribute to the achievement of these goals, which must be at the centre of the monitoring exercise.**

**In particular, one of the objectives should receive special attention: objective 16.3 on access to justice; improving access to justice is one of the indispensable means for the realization of the SDGs, since it offers individual and collective avenues for solutions (see the work of the Working Group on Access to Justice for Children).**

6. How do you think the Committee could advance the standards and practices on child participation and particularly children’s right to participate in political life?

**The Committee constantly reminds States of the importance of this right: children must be involved by the most appropriate means in the implementation of public policies. It can also list examples of interesting practices that may inspire States. In this respect, great imagination is also needed to find innovative ways.**

**It also seems to me very important to continue to demonstrate that children's participation has the effect of improving public policies. Mechanisms for consultation with children must be developed and used systematically.**

**I also believe that lowering the voting age will help to give greater importance to issues of concern to children, as they will need to be taken into account by politicians in their programmes, speeches and achievements.**

**And, of course, the Committee has a duty to set an example by ensuring the participation of children to the greatest extent possible in its monitoring work, in all its activities and in its communication.**

7. What can the Committee do to further strengthen its engagement with civil society?

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