Joint NGO statement

**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders**

Dear Madame Special Rapporteur,

Your report commemorating 25 years of achievements since the adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders is a milestone for child human rights defenders.

It gives evidence to the positive contribution that child human rights defenders have made to the advancement of human rights in their countries. The report mentions emblematic examples, however, there are many more that remain invisible, ignored, and even suppressed by duty-bearers.

More work needs to be done to document and collect disaggregated data on the activities of child human rights defenders to challenge those who keep denying the fact that children can be human rights defenders and change the narrative. This will be crucial to better understand the unique and intersecting forms of discrimination and barriers that children face when acting as defenders, as well as the risks, violations of their rights, and reprisals, and how to address these.

We welcome your recommendations:

1. to explicitly recognize that children who take action on human rights have rights as defenders and that States should promote their rights,
2. that States should address negative attitudes towards them and strengthen their capacity to engage meaningfully with child human rights defenders.

With the growing mobilisation of children worldwide, including as defenders of environmental rights, States should increase efforts to ensure heightened protection to and effective empowerment of child human rights defenders. The Declaration should be used to reinforce the implementation of the UNCRC in this regard. Your technical guidance will be critical for this.

As we celebrate this important Declaration, we look forwards to collaborating with your mandate to “bring the voices of child human rights defenders to the fore” – as you state in your report.

Thank you.

Signatories:

1. Terre des Hommes International Federation
2. Child Rights Connect
3. Child Rights Coalition Asia
4. Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
5. Defence for Children International (DCI)
6. Save the Children International