



Child Rights Connect statement
Opening of the 94th session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
4 September 2023

Distinguished members of the Committee,

As most of you know, 40 years ago a group of pioneering NGOs created Child Rights Connect with the purpose of achieving the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since then, Child Rights Connect has been the bridge between the Committee and civil society, including children. All civil society organisations and children's groups rely on Child Rights Connect's guidance and support when it comes to engaging in the work of the Committee. On 26 May, we commemorated our 40 years with you and more than 200 key players of the global child rights movement, in particular our global Children's Advisory Team. This team is a legacy of your 2018 Day of General Discussion on child human rights defenders.

Far from being a mere commemorative event, our conference in May was a much-needed critical conversation about strengthening the child rights movement in the context of a growing general backlash against human rights and a specific pushback on children's rights. All messages underpinned a strong call for progress towards a common narrative crafted with children, as well as recognition that child human rights defenders play a key role in the child rights movement – often leading by example and achieving unprecedented results. It is time for the child rights movement to take bold action to give space to children, to include them in adult-centred discussions around civic space, to accelerate the universal acceptance of their civil and political rights, and to empower them to seek remedies and reparation when their rights as defenders are violated.

Children have great expectations of the Committee in this regard. The wide mobilization of children around General Comment 26 has contributed to leverage the action of environmental child human rights defenders. By providing long-overdue authoritative guidance on how children's rights are impacted by the environmental crisis, and what States must do to uphold these rights, the General Comment is a major achievement. We welcome the strong recommendations to States to protect and empower environmental child human rights defenders, for them to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, as well as to access to justice and remedies. Indeed, the General Comment acts as an affirmative response to children's call on the UN system to act on environmental issues to protect their rights. Child Rights Connect is glad that children have been at the core of the development of the General Comment, with the setup of a dedicated Children's Advisory Team and contributions from over 16,000 children. It also follows long-term advocacy from the Child Rights Connect Working Group on child rights and the environment. The Working Group and our global Children's Advisory Team should be key partners in the implementation of the General Comment.

I thank you.

Alex Conte
Executive Director
child rights connect