



ADULTS GUIDELINES FOR THE EVENT

To make sure that children are safe and empowered to participate actively and on an equal footing with adults during the event, we have listed below some key recommendations collected from children who have participated in events at different levels. Please keep them in mind and apply them at all times, both in the **online and offline environment**.

1) **USE ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE** - *Children repeatedly tell us that language used by adults is very technical and difficult to understand (particularly at the UN), and that using more accessible child-friendly language can empower them to follow discussions and feel able to participate actively. This relates to all settings, including when adults are speaking on a panel, facilitating discussions, asking questions/giving comments or talking to children during the breaks.*

- ✓ Make a conscious effort to adapt the language you use to make sure it is not too technical. Try to use less words and not overcomplicate.
- ✓ You can use simple language without talking down to children – make sure that you respect their views and opinions in the same way as adults.
- ✓ Speak slowly.
- ✓ Respond to your audience and if children look confused or bored, try to re-phrase and re-adapt the language you are using.
- ✓ Avoid any acronyms.
- ✓ Remember you can remind other adults about using child-friendly language and help them!
- ✓ If a question or comment from a child is unclear, you could reflect on the elements you did understand and then encourage them by taking the time to explore what they want to say. Work with what you have and try not to make the child feel intimidated or 'on the spot.'

2) **BE SENSITIVE & GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT** – *Children have told us that meetings and events are not usually child-friendly spaces and that they often feel intimidated and overwhelmed in such formal settings and procedures. Children have suggested that being sensitive to a child's feelings and encouraging them can help them to feel empowered and respected.*

- ✓ This might be the first time that children are participating in such a meeting and the formalities are not familiar to them.
- ✓ If children appear nervous, try to support them with encouraging comments, like 'it is great to hear your opinion and you explained really well your idea that ... your very interesting experience helps us to now think about...'
- ✓ Crucially, remember to thank them for their participation.
- ✓ Be careful about the way you phrase a comment or question which could be perceived differently. For example, 'I can't believe you didn't have notes!' could be a compliment to their

ability to talk on a certain topic, but it might be taken as ‘you should have prepared notes!’. Actively reflect on how something might be interpreted differently.

- ✓ Do not interrupt a child when they are speaking – be lenient with time when children are speaking, recognising they often feel nervous and exposed.

3) **LISTEN** – *Children repeatedly tell us after participating in events that they do not feel that adults take them seriously. Children want to feel listened to and suggest for adults to make an extra effort to actively listen to and take their views into account equally.*

- ✓ Make an extra effort to pay attention when children are talking (such as not having a separate conversation or being on your phone) to help ensure they feel respected and listened to.
- ✓ Remember that children are equal rights holders and should be taken seriously as experts in their own right.
- ✓ Do not tell a child their opinion or answer is wrong. It is possible to highlight alternative viewpoints or approaches but be careful in the way you frame your reply.

4) **SAFETY** – *Children have told us that they often feel at risk of reprisals when acting as a human rights defender. This can include bullying online and offline, feeling excluded from others and being targeted when they return home. Adults can help by being aware of when a child may need help and following child safeguarding measures.*

- ✓ The priority is to ensure all child participants are free from any harm before, during and after the event. [The Child Rights Connect Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedure¹](#) applies. Please read it carefully and apply it at all times.
- ✓ If you are concerned about a child’s safety, you can go to the dedicated child safeguarder of the event (details will be shared with participants). If a child approaches you during the event with a concern about theirs or another’s safety, the child safeguarding policy and procedure guides you in how to respond.
- ✓ Remember that the child participants can freely choose to stop participating / remove themselves from any discussion or role they may have at any time, and no pressure should be given otherwise.

¹ Available in French here: https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/child_safeguarding_policy_procedure_2019_fr.pdf and in Spanish here: https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/child_safeguarding_policy_procedure_2019_es.pdf