



Elections 2024

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Human Rights Committee (HR Cttee)

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 2024.

In order to strengthen the treaty bodies, the International Disability Alliance, Child Rights Connect and IWRAW Asia-Pacific – 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 General Assembly 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 and CESCRC in advance of the elections.

The written responses to the questionnaires will be made available on the website www.untbelections.org, while the video responses will be shared on a dedicated [YouTube page](#).

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 the NGO Defense for children International - ECPAT Belgium*

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

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?

NO

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



- *Editor-in-chief of the "Journal du droit des jeunes", a monthly publication aimed at professionals working in the fields of youth, child protection, justice and children's participation.*
- *Director of Jeunesse & Droit, an association that aims to inform and train professionals in children's rights*
- *Member of the Centre interdisciplinaire des droits de l'enfant (Interdisciplinary Centre for Children's Rights), which brings together 4 universities and organises a Certificate and Master's degree in children's rights and carries out academic research on children's rights.*
- *Professor and trainer in children's rights*
- *Lecturer*
- *Vice-President of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, the body responsible for monitoring the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Belgium*

8. The commitments as a Committee member are very time-consuming during and outside session time. How will you ensure to have the capacity to dedicate the necessary time to the work of the Committee, both in person and online?

I am applying for a second mandate; I have a very clear view of the time that my mandate takes up and I have been able to demonstrate that I have devoted the time and energy necessary to take on all the tasks and many others such as participation in pilot projects, representation of the Committee in various internal working groups (on Individual Communications, drafting of General Comment 27, working methods, relations with various bodies at European level) and external working groups (focal point for reform of the treaty bodies, focal point for various geographical areas, focal point for harmonisation of working methods for individual communications), speaking at conferences and webinars, etc. I have reduced my professional working hours to be able to take on all these tasks.

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



Challenges: guaranteeing sufficient support for the treaty bodies (the UN liquidity crisis is the latest example to show that when savings have to be made, it is the defence of human rights that is affected first), which includes strengthening the Committee's secretariat and the petitions section; the lack of resources allocated to the Committee's work is the cause of a backlog of reports awaiting examination (nearly 80 in total) and individual communications (around a hundred). There are many other challenges linked to the ratification of the OPIC (only 52 countries have ratified it), the implementation of recommendations and follow-up to concluding observations by States, the effective and proactive collaboration of States in the reporting system, the quality and independence of Committee members and their commitment to their mandate, the maintenance of the quality of the Committee's work, the harmonisation of practices between committees and other human rights mechanisms, and so on.

Prospects for improvement: civil society campaigns to strengthen the treaty bodies are important. In addition, we must continue to advocate a commitment by States to the treaty bodies and to respecting the recommendations and views addressed to them. Generally speaking, some of the difficulties mentioned above may eventually be encountered by the reform projects currently being adopted: generalisation of the simplified reporting procedure, predictive calendar, deadlines between two reports extended to 8 years, mid-term review, etc. Maintaining dialogue and regular meetings between the committees and other mechanisms, and working with civil society, national human rights institutions and UN agencies are also among the ways in which the treaty bodies can be maintained or strengthened.

10. (Updated question!) The COVID-19 pandemic has stalled, set back progress and exacerbated the challenge of ensuring that children's needs are met and their rights guaranteed. In recognition of these negative effects that are expected to persist in the long term and the multiplicity of crises that disproportionately affect children worldwide, the UN Secretary General released in July 2023 a [Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming](#) mandating the mobilisation of the UN system to collectively strengthen and elevate a shared UN child rights agenda. How can the Committee contribute to this mobilisation and ensure that children's rights are mainstreamed across all pillars of the UN?

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is naturally mobilised to participate in the integration of children's rights in all United Nations bodies, procedures and agencies, and participated in the drafting of the guidance note.

Link to your full resume: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/beno%C3%A9t-van-keirsbilck-3b6b191a/>



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**.

Your motivation, experience and qualifications to become a member

1. What motivates you to be a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child? **(video option)**

I have over 35 years' professional experience in the field of children's rights and have devoted my entire career to promoting greater respect for the rights of the child enshrined in the CRC. My work in the field with young people and families has made me aware of the realities faced by children and the importance of ensuring their participation in all procedures and issues that affect them. As founder and director of Defence for Children International - Belgium and a number of other NGOs working in the field of children's rights, I am involved in monitoring the implementation of the CRC in Belgium, in particular by participating in the drafting of alternative reports for the United Nations treaty bodies and by carrying out projects to review and improve the situation. I have been able to work in direct services for children and families, in training professionals, in analysing public policy and practice, in academic training and research, in involving children in all matters that concern them and in developing strategic litigation to advance children's rights.

2. Taking into account the current composition and expertise of the Committee, what would be your added value? **(video option)**

My long experience in the field in Belgium, Europe and internationally, my extensive knowledge of national and international mechanisms, my participation in the global study on children deprived of their liberty and many other international initiatives and programmes, and above all my experience of a first term on 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?

See question 9 in part 1 above.

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



The first priority is to strengthen access to justice and remedies for children, and to make them effective and child-friendly; this priority is the subject of the next general comment, which is currently being drafted; secondly, it is essential to strengthen the mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the Convention on the Rights of the Child at national, regional and international level.

Other important themes include the right to education, the protection of children against violence, particularly in the context of armed conflict or migration, the right to identity, monitoring the implementation of the Convention in territories that are not recognised as States or are governed by non-recognised authorities, and the rights of the child in the digital world, to name but a few.

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

The links between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals are obvious and very important; the Committee refers to the SDGs in its concluding observations for all the States under review, participates in working groups and ensures that children are integrated into each of the goals.

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 and child human rights defenders?

The Committee strengthens children's participation through the recommendations it makes to States, by supporting initiatives at national, regional or international level and by integrating participation into all its activities: the examination of States parties, the drafting of general comments, the organisation of conferences and days of general discussion. In addition, Committee members are generally available to participate in meetings with children in different contexts.

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

Collaboration with civil society is one of the keys to improving implementation of and compliance with the CRC at national and international level. The Committee has long experience of working with CS, since NGOs and other associations have a place in the reporting process and their contribution is valued; the Committee also relies on CS for the follow-up to the concluding observations and action on the ground; in other areas (drafting of general comments, days of general discussion, etc.), collaboration with CS is well established. It should be preserved and strengthened as far as possible.