



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: *Lina Kjostarova Unkovska*

2. Nationality: *Macedonian*

3. Current position: *Founder / Executive Director of the CPCA (Center for Psychosocial and Crisis Action) - Malinska, and PI of HBSC (Health Behaviour in School Aged Children) Study for North Macedonia.*

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 am not holding any Government position, or on behalf of, or for it.

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:

There is no conflict of interest that may interfere with the independence of my work on CR issues.

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

My candidacy was initiated and coordinated by the Permanent Mission of North Macedonia to the United Nations in New York, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, I believe through a broad and transparent process.

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

I am practitioner, researcher, analyst and consultant in the fields of psychology, crisis and trauma intervention, child development, education and health promotion, evidence and children rights based, and will remain engaged, as such.

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 aware of how time consuming this position might be. However, at the same time, I am quite well in organizing my time, by responding to the tasks that I give the priority. I am aware that I'll need to review my existing commitments and prioritise tasks related to the Committee, such as attending meetings, reviewing documents, and collaborating with other members.

This will include a detailed schedule of the time before and after each meeting, to review the agendas and relevant documents, as well to complete any action items, or follow ups. Also, I plan to communicate my availability to the Committee by establishing clear boundaries around and when I am able to dedicate time to its activities, for example I may set some evenings, or weekends as Committee-free times, to focus on personal and professional commitments. I could also delegate some tasks to other committee members, if this seems to be more effective for a task fulfilment, within a given



timeframe. In addition, while staying organised I will also be flexible, recognising that unexpected events and emergencies may arise, that require me to adjust my plans, and find alternative solutions to ensure that I can fulfil my obligation to the Committee.

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

Among significant challenges I see are often **backlog of reports** submitted by States parties and **delays in the review process**, which can result in prolonged gaps between reviews, hindering the timely examination of States' compliance with their obligations under the CRC. Also, **lack of implementation and follow-up mechanisms** is a great challenge, that need to be worked on. Despite issuing recommendations, the CRC Committee often **struggles to ensure the effective implementation** of its findings by States parties, that can be related to the fact that many states parties also **lack the capacity and expertise** to effectively implement children's rights obligations and engage with the CRC Committee. Providing targeted capacity-building support, technical assistance, and training to States parties, national human rights institutions, and civil society organizations on CRC reporting, implementation, and monitoring, can help strengthen their engagement with the CRC Committee and enhance the promotion and protection of children's rights at the national level.

On the other hand, like other treaty bodies, the CRC Committee operates under **resource constraints**, limiting its ability to effectively carry out its mandate in supporting the states in need. Securing adequate and sustainable funding from States parties, exploring alternative funding sources such as voluntary contributions, and prioritizing resource allocation based on the most pressing needs of the CRC Committee could help enhance its functioning and effectiveness.

Additional great challenge for the treaty body is to ensure **accessibility and inclusivity** within the CRC Committee's processes, where many children and youth, particularly those from marginalized communities, face barriers to participating in CRC Committee proceedings and accessing information about their rights. By providing child-friendly materials, facilitating child and youth participation in CRC Committee sessions and consultations, and engaging with children and youth-led organizations to amplify their voices and perspectives can help enhance accessibility and inclusivity within the CRC Committee's work.

Coordination and coherence is one more "invisible" challenge for the CRC Committee, leading to potential duplication of efforts and inconsistencies in the interpretation and application of children's rights standards. Enhancing coordination and coherence among treaty bodies, UN agencies, regional human rights mechanisms, and other stakeholders through regular dialogue, information-sharing, and joint initiatives can help promote a more coherent and harmonized approach to children's rights protection at the international level.

Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort by States parties, the CRC Committee, UN agencies, civil society organizations, children and youth. By prioritizing resource allocation, enhancing accessibility and inclusivity, strengthening implementation and follow-up mechanisms, promoting coordination and coherence, and investing in capacity-building and knowledge-sharing initiatives, the CRC Committee can become more responsive, accountable, and impactful in promoting and protecting the rights of children globally.



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 can contribute to the mobilization of the entire UN system by advocating children's rights prioritization across all pillars. Through policy development and review, the Committee can ensure alignment with international standards, identifying and addressing gaps in existing frameworks. Capacity building within the UN system can enhance understanding and integration of children's rights, while monitoring and reporting mechanisms help track progress and hold stakeholders accountable. Collaborating with other UN bodies and stakeholders fosters a collective approach, maximizing impact. Additionally, ensuring inclusive participation of children in decision-making processes ensures their voices are heard and their perspectives considered. Through these actions, the Committee can play an essential role in elevating a shared UN child rights agenda, mitigating the long-term negative effects intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises, and safeguarding children's rights globally.

Link to your full resume:



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**.*

As a psychologist, I am acutely aware of the profound impact that mental health issues among adolescents and the prevalence of violence against children, in particular family violence, can have on children's well-being and development. These pressing concerns serve as powerful motivations for me to contribute my expertise and advocacy efforts as a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Additionally, I am aware of the influence of cultural biases and norms on children's rights and well-being, that can either facilitate or impede the realization of children's rights, particularly regarding issues such as gender equality, education, and protection from harm.

The escalating rates of depression, anxiety, and self-harm among young people highlight the urgent need for comprehensive mental health support and early intervention. Witnessing or experiencing family violence can inflict long-lasting psychological trauma on children, underscoring the critical importance of effective prevention and intervention measures. Moreover, the power of cultural biases and norms emphasizes the necessity of promoting cultural sensitivity within the Committee's work. By leveraging my expertise, I aim to advocate for policies that prioritize mental health promotion, combat violence against children, including family violence, and foster a culture of inclusivity and respect for children's rights, regardless of cultural backgrounds. Ultimately, my motivation lies in ensuring that every child has the opportunity to thrive in a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment.

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

As a psychologist, practitioner, and researcher specializing in children's trauma, resiliency, and wellbeing my addition to the Committee would bring a unique blend of practical experience and academic expertise to the table. My background equips me with a deep understanding of the psychological needs and developmental challenges faced by children, allowing me to offer valuable insights into the Committee's discussions and decision-making processes. Drawing on my experience working directly with children and families in critical life conditions and/or of deprived communities, I can provide real-world perspectives on the impact of policies and interventions on children's lives. Additionally, my research experience enables me to critically evaluate existing evidence, identify gaps in knowledge, and advocate for evidence-based approaches to promoting children's rights and well-being. With a commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and a focus on holistic approaches to children's rights, I am confident in my ability to contribute effectively to the Committee's work, ensuring that children's voices are heard and their rights are protected.

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?

Emerging issues and challenges in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols on a global scale include the growing impact of digital technology on children's rights, the increasing number of child migrants and refugees, and the persistent prevalence of violence against children, both online and offline. In the Balkan countries, specific



challenges include inadequate access to quality education and healthcare for marginalized children, the lingering effects of armed conflict and political instability on children's rights, and the need for greater protection of children's rights within the justice system. Additionally, socio-economic disparities and discrimination against minority groups further exacerbate these challenges. Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts to strengthen legal frameworks, improve access to essential services, promote awareness and education on children's rights, and enhance collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, and international actors. By prioritizing the rights and well-being of children, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

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

The Committee on the Rights of the Child should prioritize strengthening international standards across various critical areas to ensure comprehensive protection for children worldwide. This includes addressing emerging challenges such as **digital rights to safeguard children's safety and privacy online**. Additionally, there's a pressing need to promote **meaningful child participation** in decision-making processes across all spheres of life. **Strengthening child protection measures** is crucial to combat exploitation, abuse, and trafficking effectively. The **impact of armed conflict on children** demands robust standards to ensure their rights are upheld, including access to education and healthcare. Furthermore, **enhancing rights for children with disabilities** is essential to guarantee their full inclusion and access to essential services. Finally, **recognizing and addressing intersecting forms of discrimination** faced by children based on factors like gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status is paramount. By prioritizing these areas, the Committee can play a pivotal role in advancing children's rights globally, fostering environments where all children can thrive, free from harm and discrimination.

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

The Committee is a critical nexus in the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), facilitating collaboration, resource mobilization, and progress monitoring. Comprised of diverse stakeholders, it serves as a dynamic platform for sharing expertise, fostering partnerships, and aligning efforts towards common objectives. By leveraging the collective knowledge and resources of its members, the Committee accelerates progress towards sustainable development.

One of its primary functions is to mobilize financial resources, advocating for investment in key areas crucial for SDG implementation, such as education (SDG 4), healthcare (SDG 3), reduced inequality (SDG10), and renewable energy. Through strategic coordination and advocacy efforts, it catalyses the allocation of funds towards sustainable development projects.

Moreover, the Committee plays a crucial role in monitoring progress towards the SDGs, providing regular assessments and recommendations to drive action and ensure accountability. By tracking indicators and identifying areas for improvement, it guides decision-making and policy formulation at various levels.

Overall, the Committee serves as a catalyst for transformative change, driving collective action towards a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all. Through collaboration, mobilization, and monitoring, it contributes significantly to the global effort to achieve the SDGs.



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 can advance standards and practices on child participation, including children's right to participate in political life and protection for child human rights defenders, through several key strategies.

Firstly, the Committee can **advocate for the incorporation of child participation principles into national legislation and policies**, ensuring that laws explicitly recognize and protect children's rights to express their views and participate in decision-making processes. Secondly, the Committee can **promote awareness and education among policymakers, professionals, and communities about the importance of child participation** and the rights of children to be heard in matters that affect them. This includes providing training and resources to enable meaningful participation in political processes and supporting the establishment of child-friendly mechanisms for engagement. Thirdly, the Committee can **collaborate with governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to develop guidelines and best practices for promoting child participation** and protecting child human rights defenders. This may involve establishing mechanisms for reporting and addressing violations of children's rights to participation and ensuring adequate support and protection for child advocates.

In general, by advocating for legal recognition, raising awareness, and fostering collaboration, the Committee can advance standards and practices on child participation, empowering children to actively engage in political life and defend human rights effectively.

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

The Committee can take several steps to further strengthen its engagement with civil society:

The Committee can establish **open and transparent communication channels with civil society organizations (CSOs)**, allowing for regular dialogue, exchange of information, and collaboration on key issues related to its mandate. It can actively involve civil society in the Committee's decision-making processes by seeking their input on policy development, agenda setting, and priority areas of focus, that **will increase their participation in decision making**. This can be done through consultations, roundtable discussions, and public hearings.

The Committee can increase the **capacity building opportunities by providing training sessions for civil society representatives** to enhance their understanding of the Committee's work, reporting mechanisms, and advocacy strategies. This will empower the CSOs to effectively engage with the Committee and contribute meaningfully to its activities. Further, by providing access to relevant resources, best practices, and platforms for collaboration, this close collaboration can further **facilitate knowledge sharing and networking among civil society organizations**.

Recognition of the valuable contributions of civil society organizations to the Committee's work **and the Committee support**, where possible, through grants, technical assistance, and other forms of assistance, will further strengthen the SCO's capacity and sustainability. In addition, ensuring transparency by sharing information and mechanisms for feedback and follow ups, brings accountability to maintain trust and credibility in the engagement process.



By implementing these strategies, the Committee can foster a more inclusive, participatory, and effective partnership with civil society, ultimately enhancing its ability to address complex challenges and advance its mandate for the benefit of all stakeholders.