

Lana's Closing Remarks at the 1st meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It has been an honour to be here these past few days, with the other children participating in these discussions. For me, this has been a very meaningful experience. We have long known how important the right to education is for children but being part of this has given me even stronger understanding of how adults and children can come together to make change possible. I also felt proud to share my voice, and to listen the voice of others.

All rights are equally important and necessary, but education has a special role, because it is the foundation that makes it possible for children to enjoy so many other rights. When the right to education is violated, so are many other rights, because education is what allows children to understand, claim, and protect their dignity. But the reality is that millions of children still face barriers. We heard the voices of over 8, 300 children from all over the world who shared their struggles and hopes. Many said the same thing: that even though the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted many years ago, their daily lives show that not much has changed. In so many countries, children are still facing the very same problems and challenges, that their parents, maybe even that grandparents faced all those years ago.

Listening to the discussions and panels here, we learned how similar the problems actually are across different regions. This tells us that these are not isolated issues - they are global ones. And because they are global, we must respond with global solutions and with urgency, solidarity, and commitment. I want to end by reminding us all; when children raise their voices, it is because they believe that change is possible. Education is not a privilege; it is a right. That is why the optional protocol is important. So, I call on you all to make a strong commitment to support and implement it, so every child, everywhere, can access free, quality and safe education from pre-primary to secondary education. I would like to repeat the words of the Chair of the CRC Committee: if this optional protocol changes the lives of children even in only one country, it was worth it.

Thank you everyone.