

# FIRST IDEA PAPER:

# ONLINE REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN ON ACCESSING FREE PRE- PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



# WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?



In many parts of the world, access to pre-primary and secondary education remains limited due to unaffordable school fees and related costs. In a United Nations (UN) survey, more than 8,000 children from 40 countries sent a clear and unified message: education should be free, inclusive, and accessible to every child at every stage of their development.

To address this ongoing gap, the UN is considering a new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The proposed protocol would ask countries to ensure free public pre-primary education—starting with at least one year—and free public secondary education.

# WHY TO ORGANIZE REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS?



In September 2025, states, experts, and five child delegates representing five regions of the world gathered in Geneva to discuss the proposed Optional Protocol and the broader issue of free education. The meeting ended with the plan to have more consultations before the 2nd session in August 2026.

If consultations are being conducted with adults to inform this process, it is important that children are also given the opportunity to participate and share their perspectives.

# WHAT COULD WE ACHIEVE WITH THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS?



Article 12 of the CRC Convention states that children have the right to participate in all decisions that concern them. It is sure that the development of a new Optional Protocol about the right to education concern children all over the world, so they should be able:

- ✓ To learn about the new Optional Protocol and the ongoing negotiation process,
- ✓ To meet and discuss their views and ideas regarding financial barriers that prevent access to free pre-primary and secondary education in their country and region,
- ✓ To coordinate their activities and advocacy efforts related to the right to free education and the development of the new Optional Protocol.

# WHO IS THE WE?



Members of the Children's Advisory Team at Child Rights Connect have been engaged in the process related to the Optional Protocol for over two years, through advocacy campaigns, letters, consultations and participation at UN meetings.

Teaming up with the child delegates representing the five regions, the child advisors can co-design and co-organize the consultations with support from their organizations and members of Child Rights Connect's Working Group on Children and the Right to Education.

# HOW CAN WE DO IT?



Consultations will take place online, in a safe environment. Each region will have one consultation with the participation of 20–25 children from the continent who has experience in advocating for education rights. The invitation will be shared with child rights organizations and networks as well as informal groups who can nominate max. 2 children. The participants should not turn 18 before December 2026 and able to participate in one of the languages of the consultation.

## Timeline proposal:

- Africa consultation: December 2025
- Europe consultation: 2026
- Latin America consultation: February 2026
- Asia consultation: 2026



THANK  
YOU