

Guidance for States on supporting child participation

at the Human Rights Council's annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child

2026 theme: Rights of the child and violations of the human rights of children in armed conflicts

Monday, 9 March 2026, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 to 5 p.m.

Why support child participation?

The Human Rights Council's annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child is a valuable opportunity to empower children in your country to share their views directly at the international level.

Children have the right to freely express their views in all matters affecting them, with their views given due weight (Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child).

As highlighted in the United Nations [Secretary-General's Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming](#), the [UN Guidance Note on Protecting and Promoting Civic Space](#) as well as the [Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs](#) adopted by the Human Rights Council, children are key civil society actors and both the United Nations and States have the responsibility to ensure that children can contribute meaningfully and effectively to the work of the United Nations, including the Human Rights Council.

Yet, children frequently face barriers to accessing the Human Rights Council, and their voices remain largely absent. By supporting a child or a group of children to speak during your allocated intervention at the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child, you can support making the Human Rights Council a more open, safe, inclusive and empowering space for children.

How can States enable children to speak at the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child?

States may give their speaking slot to a child representative from their respective country to share their own views and recommendations.

To ensure a transparent selection process, States are recommended to engage with pre-existing groups of children (e.g. children's parliaments, school councils, etc.) and empower them to select one child representative as the Human Rights Council allows only one speaker per intervention

Empowering pre-existing groups of child advocates in your country to select a child representative to speak on their behalf will help ensure that a diversity of voices is heard at the Human Rights Council. Several States have done this successfully in past annual full-day meetings on the rights of the child.

The child advocate can intervene either in person or through a video statement. Only the child's first name should be included when registering in the list of speakers and the State should prioritize the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child panel on the Events platform, to increase opportunities for the child to speak.

Key principles to ensure empowering, inclusive, sustained and safe child participation:

1. Standards set by the Committee on the Rights of the Child

All processes involving children's participation should meet the nine standards set by the Committee on the Rights of the Child ([General Comment 12](#)). Every step of engagement with children must be: transparent and informative; voluntary; respectful; relevant; child-friendly; inclusive; supported by training; safe and sensitive to risk; and accountable.

2. Identify national partners who work directly with children

Identify partners at the national level that work directly with children in your country and that are equipped to support safe, ethical and inclusive child participation at the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child. Examples include: Children's Parliament; national child rights coalition; UNICEF; national human rights institution; independent children's rights institutions; non-governmental organisations.

Child Rights Connect can support connections to partners in your country.

3. Provide child-friendly information and preparation

Ensure children understand:

1. What the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child is.
2. What the Human Rights Council does.
3. What the 2026 theme means; and,
4. What speaking at the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child involves.

You may wish to consult the child-friendly documentation developed by OHCHR:

- Concept note for the 2026 annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child: [English](#) | [Français](#) | [Español](#)
- Child-friendly version of the High Commissioner's report on the Rights of the child and violations of the human rights of children in armed conflicts ([A/HRC/60/51](#)): [English](#) – [Spanish](#) – [French](#) – [Arabic](#) – [Ukrainian](#)

Consider organising preparatory meetings so children can ask questions, practice, and feel confident.

4. Set up a fair and empowering selection process

With your national partners: explain the opportunity clearly; support children to learn about children's rights and the United Nations; and decide together how to select a child representative.

Keep in mind that child must speak in one of the United Nations' six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

5. Ensure child safeguarding

Child safeguarding must underpin the entire process. Identify partners that have adequate child safeguarding policies and procedures. If a child is travelling to deliver the statement in person at the Human Rights Council, a supporting/ accompanying adult or chaperone should accompany the child and should be the focal point for their safeguarding.

a) Risk assessment:

Speaking in the Human Rights Council is a public event as it will be broadcast live on UN TV.

Complete a risk assessment specific to the children you will be empowering and the context of the activity. This should be a mandatory joint task with the national partners. Things to consider include safety of communication platforms; privacy and sharing information online; travel and logistical risks; political environment and risk of reprisals; levels of adult support to the participating child; and whether the child is new to advocacy.

An example of a template of a risk assessment can be found on : Child Rights Connect Safeguarding Policy and Procedure: <https://childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/crcnct-child-safeguarding-policy-procedure.pdf>.

Consent forms:

All children participating in the Human Rights Council —whether by video statement or in person— together with their parents or legal guardians, must complete and sign the official HRC consent form: [guidelines-child-participation-hrc-consent-fo.docx](#)

It is essential to share information and details of the activities taking place and child safeguarding measures, to ensure awareness among all children and adults involved and their written consent that they understand the information and agree to certain roles.

Informed consent should be collected from: child participants; parents or guardians; supporting organisations/national partners; and accompanying adult/ chaperone.

Templates are available in EN, FR and ES and can be adapted.

b) Safeguarding measures during the event:

- Standard Human Rights Council procedures apply at all times.
- Children will not be asked to answer questions or statements from the floor.
- Photos cannot be taken in the meeting room, except by accredited Press
- You may take photos/videos elsewhere but please check that the other children/chaperones are happy for photos/videos to be taken and posted online.
- Use of first names of children only.

- Children can stop their participation at any time.
- Chaperones are the main responsible adults for the children they are supporting and are therefore requested to be with them.

6. Secure your speaking slot at the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child:

Please select the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child as priority number 1 when registering.

Please register as early as possible to avoid losing the slot, which would be very disappointing for the children.

If you can support the child to travel to Geneva, consider supporting the child to participate in other activities. This can be a very empowering experience as the child will be able to meet other children participating at the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child and learn from each other.

If the child participates via video statement, follow the Human Rights Council's content and technical specifications. Further details can be found in the *Guidance Note on Video Statements* available under Pages - List of speakers.

7. Sustained engagement:

Ensure that this is not a one-off event. After the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child: discuss the experience with the children, seek their feedback, explore how to continue the dialogue at national level, and identify future opportunities for meaningful engagement.

You can seek support on how to ensure an empowering, inclusive, safe, and sustained participatory process and keep us informed if you plan to support children!

Contact us by reaching out to:

- Child Rights Connect: gracia@childrightsconnect.org
- OHCHR Human Rights Council Branch: gemma.kentish@un.org
- OHCHR Child and Youth Rights Unit: sulini.sarugaser@un.org
