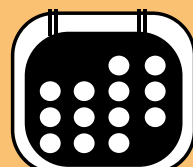


**Comments from child delegates and
child advisors about the**

**Draft Principles for the Elaboration
of an Optional Protocol to the
Convention on the Rights of the
Child on Free Public Pre-Primary
and Secondary Education**



16th May 2026

CAT
Children's Advisory Team



child rights connect

Two consultations were held online on the 16th May 2026.

The participants were child delegates to the IGWG, child advisors from the Child Rights Connect Children's Advisory Team and other children who participated at the child-led regional consultations.

**The children were from
Indonesia, Croatia,
Mexico, Afghanistan,
Sierra Leone, Northern
Ireland, Sweden,
Nigeria and Ecuador.**



Principle 1



Child participation is a mandate that comes from a very high level – both from the Convention and from the Human Rights Council resolution. Children should participate in all processes that might affect their lives.

Principle 4



Strong support for this principle, although they said “maximum available resources” in the text is still a political decision.



Some states may need financial and technical support, but those which can, should provide international development funding.

Principle 5



Since children already engage with monitoring under the CRC Convention, and it is formally protected, it makes sense for the optional protocol to work the same way – children should participate in the monitoring.



When states prepare their state report, they should also involve children in preparing it.



Child-led data, information, and benchmarks are important to be able to assess the situation.

Principle 6



This is the first time in history that children have participated in the development of an optional protocol, and the scale of interest is visible in how many children took part across different moments and activities.



Child participation should go further than it is in the text now and it should be more child-oriented.



The UN should bring in more diverse voices that are not currently in the process. It affects children, so children should be there and participating, including vulnerable children.

Principle 6



It is good that this is acknowledged in the preamble, but the current text is backward-looking and says nothing about the role of children for the FUTURE. There should be a forward-looking commitment that acknowledges the role of children and child-led organizations at different levels:

- the development, revise, implementation, and monitoring of national laws and policies related to the Optional Protocol,**
- the advocacy for joining and ratifying the Optional Protocol,**
- the monitoring of the Optional Protocol.**

Principle 6



To ensure safe and meaningful participation, children need:

- **safe and child–friendly spaces created by the states,**
- **to be taken seriously and heard,**
- **accessible, translated, child–friendly version of the Optional Protocol and**
- **awareness–raising. This is a must, all children need to learn about the Optional Protocol and understand it.**

“We are not only subjects. We are active participants.”

Principle 7



There are different pathways for the education of different children, and there can be different types of schools. On secondary school in particular, academia is not for everyone – it should be acknowledged that secondary education can happen in different ways that feed the child's interests and aspirations.

Principle 8



The Optional Protocol should be translated into many different languages, with child-friendly versions, alongside general awareness-raising targeting all adults and children.



The extension of the communication procedure to the rights affirmed by the Optional Protocol should be automatic.

Principle 10



Child participation costs money and requires resources, but child participation funding should be a protected line in the budget, even in times of budget cuts.



If it is truly impossible to have children travel and to sponsor them, then at a minimum there should be videos.

“Physical presence of a child in the room is crucial. There should be no compromise about this.”

Lack of reference to children facing additional challenges



It was striking that no specific group of children was mentioned as needing particular attention.



Several groups of children suffer from discrimination and may not have equal access to quality education – especially children with disabilities, children from minority and indigenous groups and girls.



Low-income families may need extra support when it comes to hidden costs.

Lack of reference to children facing additional challenges



Two solutions are possible:

- **To prepare one, separate article on equal access.**
- **There is a comprehensive article in the CRC Convention covering discrimination and equality (Article 2). Rather than repeating it, the optional protocol should refer to it in the preamble and treat it as an overarching principle.**

“Quality education should be available for all, not only on paper.”

Additional comments



National crises should not justify any impact on children accessing free public primary and secondary education. Education is always a priority.



Public policies should endorse access to the internet and technology, because it can also enhance access to public education.

“Every child, no matter how they are, should be able to go to school, and the government should facilitate the education of those who have special needs.”