

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES REPORT

JUNE 2021 - SEPTEMBER 2021

This report covers the period from the end of the 87th Session to the end of the 88th Session. The 88th Session was conducted in-person and the CRC was the first of the Treaty Bodies to meet in this manner but with special restrictions as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic, which still remains a factor in proceedings, affecting the ability of some States to travel to Geneva, Switzerland for in-person review.

I. Activities of the Working Groups of the Committee.

Working Group on Working Methods

Coordinator Luis Pedernera reports:

The Working Group agreed to propose amendments to the reporting guidelines. The draft amendments will be prepared by the next session.

It was also agreed to consider the introduction of procedures for follow-up to the Concluding Observations and a comparative study of the practices of some other Treaty Bodies was prepared for the discussion. We also discussed how to address the backlog of reviews of State Parties reports and proposals were made to the Bureau.

Working Group on the Rights of the Child in relation to the Digital Environment

Coordinator Philip Jaffe reports:

Following consultation with its members, the decision was taken at the start of the current session to officially dissolve this Working Group. Its purpose was primarily to produce General Comment 25 and to effect its launch. During the most recent intersession and the current in person session, the following requests for participation in events related to GC 25 were honoured:

- June 29. UNCRC General Comment 25: Children’s rights and the digital environment: impact assessment and corporate responsibility, *Social Media and Children’s Rights*, Digital Law Center and CIDE, Université de Genève.
- August 18. *General comment 25: salient features*. Regional launch Child Rights Coalition Asia (online).
- September 1. *The digital rights of children. Main takeaways from the General Comment 25 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*. Iranian Association for UN Studies (online).
- September 22. *Digital Citizens: Progressing children’s right to be heard through social and digital media*. Ombudsman for Children and University of Dublin, Ireland.

Working Group on Children's Rights and the Environment

Co-coordinators Philip Jaffe’ and Velina Todorova report:

This new Working Group was formed primarily to focus on the development of General Comment 26 on Children's Rights and the Environment, with special focus on Climate Change.

The group held several meetings online and in person to finalize the Concept Note, select and meet with the external partner Terre des hommes, Germany whose expertise will guide the Committee to completion of the General Comment and to agree on a work plan that will lead to a projected adoption and launch by February 2023.

Working Group on the DGD on Alternative Care

Co-coordinators Ann Skelton and Bragi Gudbrandsson report:

The Committee’s first online Day of General Discussion on Children’s Rights in Alternative Care was held on 16 and 17 September.

There was substantial inter-sessional work carried out by the Working Group, together with the OHCHR, the CSO task force, and the Children and Young Peoples Advisory Teams in order to plan for the DGD. Over 200 submissions were received and these were compiled into a background document. Logistical arrangements were also provided in partnership with the CSO Task Force and with the support of UNICEF.

The event was hybrid in nature with Committee members participating at Palais des Nations, while attendees participated or watched on line from all parts of the Globe. Children and young people with care experience were central participants as they were key speakers in every session. Twenty five children and young people

participated in the Advisory Team and fifteen of them were speakers or participants in sessions of the DGD.

The plenary sessions featured expert inputs from UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children, as well as speakers from different regions regarding preparatory work that had been done to collect information for the DGD. Parallel working groups permitted participants to explore a range of thematic issues. The Committee expresses its appreciation to everyone who participated and all those who worked behind the scenes to make the DGD a success.

The Committee, in consultation with partners, will now embark on the next phase of this work: to complete an outcomes document and final report.

Working Group on the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (OPIC)

Co-coordinator Ann Skelton reports:

The Working Group on the Communications Procedure (OPIC) held its first pre-session meeting in Geneva on 1st and 2nd September to work on individual communications. The Committee has finalised eight individual communication decisions during the current session.

In addition, the Committee adopted an amendment to Rule 19 of the Rules of Procedure, approved new Guidelines on Oral Hearings and took decisions regarding the Report on Follow Up to previous decisions.

Sub group on Inquiries

Co-coordinators Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi and José Rodriguez Reyes Report:

A separate sub-group on Inquiries was developed, and held three meetings to date to review working methods and inquiry decisions.

A draft is being finalized for further discussion in the main OPIC Working Group before transmission to plenary.

Working Group on the Draft Statement on the Rights of Children with Disabilities

Coordinator Velina Todorova reports:

The Working Group met on 30 July to discuss and propose changes to the two paragraphs-14 and 23 on Violence and Justice respectively, as modified by CRPD. The agreed version was sent to CRPD, who provided their reply on 6 September. Following the DGD, this Group is presently discussing the last paragraphs on Family and Alternative Care.

Focal Point--Media /Twitter

Co-coordinators Philip Jaffe' and Benoit Van Keirsbilck report:

The Committee's twitter account, @UNChildRights1, continues to gather followers which now stand at 1049. The activity revolves around signalling important UNCRC news, informing followers of participation of CRC members in various official events, and retweeting significant human rights news from within the UN system (OHCHR, Treaty Bodies, etc.). There is a growing push from external entities to promote their own news by mentioning the Committee's twitter handle.

Focal Point of the Committee and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children in Armed Conflict:

Coordinator Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi reports:

The joint statement between CRC / CEDAW on the rights of children born of rape during armed conflict and their mothers was adopted on 7 September by the CRC. The Office of the SRSG proposed the publication of this statement for October 2021 and will organize a side event on the occasion, in the context of the WPS week, which will also promote the collaboration between Treaty Bodies and the SRSG's Office as a Security Council mechanism.

Inter Parliamentary Union Focal Point

Sophie Kiladze reports:

There was elaboration of potential IPU/CRC cooperation as approved by the Secretary General of (IPU).

This was discussed by the CRC Plenary and there was a Bureau decision to invite IPU members for detailed discussion of concrete steps of cooperation during the January 2022 Session.

Focal point for Latin America and the Caribbean

José Rodríguez Reyes reports:

The members of the region held a meeting with the Movimiento Mundial por la Infancia Capitulo Latinoamericana y Caribe (MMILAC), which brings together children's organizations and intergovernmental agencies in the region.

We have agreed to maintain a permanent dialogue and work on a road map to facilitate implementation and collaboration with the agenda of our Committee.

Focal Point for Europe

Bragi Gudbrandsson and Benoit Van Keirsbilck report:

They contacted the main actors in the field of Children's Rights in both the European Union and the Council of Europe and had a first online meeting with them.

They met with the Coordinator of the Children's Rights Unit of the Council of Europe (Regina Jensdottir); the Children Rights Coordinator in the European Commission (Valeria Setti), and with the Children's Rights Coordinator of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU and her colleagues (Marta Tarragona Fenosa, Astrid Podsiadlowski and Monica Gutierrez).

These persons already meet on a regular basis for coordination and updates of the main developments in their respective institutions. They welcomed having regular exchanges with the CRC Committee in order to support its work and promote its standards since CRC is the baseline of their work and they often make use of the CRC and other main children's rights standards.

They are interested in knowing more about the developments occurring in other regions and are willing to share their experience with them, hoping that these exchanges become a mutual source of inspiration.

We identified some areas of possible collaboration in the dissemination of the work of the Committee; support in the follow up of the COBs; development of child friendly material and promotion of OPIC, both strategically and as a part of the issue of the access to justice.

It was decided we would meet twice a year and regularly exchange information relevant to our work.

II. Participation of Members

Several members participated in the University of Geneva's Summer School, "Children's Rights at the Heart of Human Rights", a first edition in partnership with the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. Members' involvement was substantive for example teaching activities as well as informal participation group discussions on the inner workings of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

III. Activities of Individual Members

Mikiko Otani – Chair

1. **June 16-18** Online: Took part and spoke at the Regional Workshops on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) and accountability, organised by the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights as per the Resolution 41/8 of the UN Human Rights Council on CEFM Suzanne Aho and Zara Ratou also participated.
2. **July 13** Online: Spoke at the side event of the 2021 High Level Political Forum "Equitable access to justice for all children," co-organized by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF and Child Rights Connect and co-sponsored by Germany and Slovenia.
3. **August 24** Online: Spoke at the webinar "Climate change and the rights of children" organized by the Diplomacy Training Program.

Suzanne Aho

For the month of June

Took part in five (05) series of video conferences whose themes focused on:

- Corporal punishment
- “Child labour”, in the context of the International Year of the Elimination of Child Labour
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Early and forced child marriage
- Climate change as structural violence

During July

Five (05) video conferences with the theme

- Access to justice for children
- Ending violence in schools
- Importance of food fortification in the fight against hunger and malnutrition in Africa
- The principle of best interests of the child and the challenge of the social worker in Africa
- Panel discussion with Child Rights Connect

Hynd Ayoubi-Idrissi

- Intervention on "child trafficking", INDH (Moroccan), June 29.
- Organized a conference-debate on "**the best interests of the child**", Mohammed V University of Rabat, July 08.
- Presentation of a statement during the interactive dialogue with the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, July 15.

Philip Jaffé

1. June 16. Online Discussion with Young Ambassadors of Rights, Ministry of Education, Israel.
2. July 28. Interdisciplinary collaboration as a tool to producing an impactful new MOOC. Towards the development of the first specialized academic Arab MOOC on Children's Rights for students and professionals working with and for children. Regional workshop hybrid, Univ. St. Joseph, Beirut, Lebanon.
3. September 9. Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Summer Course of the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations. Maison des Associations, Geneva.

Sophie Kiladze

1. **July 25**: Government of Georgia event in collaboration with UNICEF regarding children in conflict with law.
2. **August 30-31**: Meeting with Government of Georgia and UNICEF regarding establishment of the coordination mechanism and implementation of the Code on the Rights of the Child.
3. Batumi International Conference on the Rights of the Child speaker.

Faith Marshall-Harris

1. Participated in several meetings with Instituto Interamericano del Niño / Organisation of American States (IIN/OAS).
2. Consultant for reform of Child Protection and Child Justice Legislation.
3. Consultant to Technical Committee reorganizing Reform Schools in Barbados.

Benyam Davit Mezmur

1. June 30: Presenter on "Non-punishment, child victims of trafficking and the Convention on the Rights of the Child" at a Side Event Panel at the 47th Human Rights Council Session. A roundtable on the application of the principle of non-punishment for victims of trafficking in persons".July 7: Presenter on "Children's rights to a healthy environment" in a Side Event Panel of the 47th Human Rights Council Session entitled "The legal aspects of the right to a healthy Environment" organized by the Geneva Academy and co-sponsored by a number of States.
2. September 16: Presenter on "Childhood Statelessness and the Convention on the Rights of the Child" at a roundtable entitled "60 Years on- The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness" organized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness.

Luis Pedernera

1. **June 30:** Speaker at the conference "Joint Efforts to Release Children from Detention during COVID-19" organized by the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law Justice and Corrections Services, Department of Peace Operations, United Nations, New York.
2. **July 12-13:** Speaker at the International Symposium "Children and adolescents deprived of liberty in conflict with criminal law in Latin America: Current situation in the region, and strategies for strengthening and monitoring" Organized by the Argentine Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, Buenos Aires.
3. **July 26th:** Speaker at the conference "Challenges in the Protection of the Human Rights of Children and Adolescent Victims of Violence", implementation of the Model of Comprehensive Care for Children and Adolescents (MAINA), for the comprehensive care of children and adolescent victims of sexual violence, abuse, human trafficking and missing children, organized by the Public Ministry of Guatemala and USAID.

Aissatou Alassane Sidikou

1. **July 6:** Online participation in the certification course in child protection and children's rights, organized by the International Institute for the Rights of the Child in Switzerland.

Ann Skelton

1. **June 23:** Keynote presenter at an expert roundtable webinar to develop and refine proposals for a Model Court for Migrant Children in England and Wales.
2. **July 1:** Presented as a panel member at the Transforming children's care webinar entitled: Child's right to identity in alternative care.
3. **August 5:** Presented at an Online Stakeholder Consultation organised by the South African Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation on the Ratification of the 3rd Optional Protocol to the CRC.

Velina Todorova

1. **May 6:** Speaker at a webinar Advancing Deinstitutionalisation hosted by the Institute for Lifecourse and Society, NUI Galway, Ireland. This was part of series of webinars themed "Living through Covid 19: A Lifecourse Perspective".
2. **June 25:** Participated in the first meeting of the Expert Reference Group established to support the development of UNICEF Global Guidance on engagement with IHRI to advance children's rights.
3. **July 21:** Participated on behalf of the Committee in a UNICEF Consultation of the Draft Global Research Agenda for Children with Disabilities.

Benoit Van Keirsbilck

1. **June 17:** Intervened in a webinar organised by the International Commission of Jurists (and partners) on the principles enshrined in the CRC related to alternatives to the detention of migrant children.
2. **September 1:** Presented during a webinar organised by DCI-Costa Rica on "Building a child friendly system guaranteeing access to justice and the right to be heard".
3. **September 9:** Took part in an exchange by ATD Fourth World with children who have experienced alternative care, discussing their experience in view of the DGD on the rights of the child in alternative care.

Faith Marshall-Harris
Vice chair and Rapporteur