



## **Child Rights Connect statement**

### **Opening of the 80<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child**

**14 January 2019**

Distinguished members of the Committee, dear OHCHR colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address you at the opening of the 80<sup>th</sup> session on behalf of Child Rights Connect.

As you know, our work with the Committee is a fundamental part of who we are and allows us to work with and for our members to enhance the lives of children throughout the world.

We are starting the year of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention with even greater enthusiasm that we had on 28 September last year, when we had about 400 people in the room, including 67 children, and 400 online for your Day of General Discussion on the protection and empowerment of children human rights defenders, that Child Rights Connect supported the Committee to realize.

The feedback we have received from the children and the adults who engaged have been overwhelmingly positive and in the last months the DGD child advisors have been busy discussing theirs and their peers' recommendations for further enhancing child participation in future DGDs, which we will share with you during this session.

The child advisors have also been carrying out many follow-up activities at national, regional and international level, in order to strengthen the understanding of the definition of children human rights defenders and their rights.

For example, Kurt, our child advisor from Argentina who was quoted earlier by the High Commissioner, actively participated in a workshop organized by the Inter-American Institute for children and adolescents to put the topic of children human rights defenders on the agenda of the 34 States who are members of the Board of the Institute.

Hannah and Cameron, our child advisors from Scotland, were involved in a Human Rights Day takeover at the Scottish Parliament. Hannah gave a speech about her experience as a human rights defender and introduced the First Minister of Scotland, to give a speech to the chamber afterwards.

During the OHCHR Human Rights Day event, Konstantinos, our Greek child advisor, directly asked Michelle Bachelet how she plans to enhance child participation in the UN.

Dear Committee members, the DGD is already having concrete positive impact on children's lives. You might all recall our child advisor from Moldova, Ariadna. She recently told us that after the DGD she saw a significant change in the attitude of the adults surrounding her, including the teachers in her schools, who are now listening more and taking more seriously what she and her peers have to say about human rights.

We, at Child Rights Connect, have heard DGD child participants saying that the DGD was one of their most empowering experiences for them, child rights experts saying that the DGD has been a milestone in the history of child participation as well as States saying that it has been an eye opener about the potential that children have to contribute constructively to international discussions with their views and experiences.

The 30th anniversary of the Convention is a unique opportunity to further strengthen commitments to, and practice of child participation, and we look forward to doing this in close collaboration with the Committee, including by making use of the DGD outcome report. Indeed, it is high time to ensure that children's right to be heard and participate is understood properly and realized effectively at all levels.

Child Rights Connect and its members are committed to put child participation at the heart of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, including by engaging the DGD child advisors, advocating for new standards on the empowerment and protection of children human rights defenders, and by stepping up the development of child friendly resources on the UN human rights system, such as the UNICEF's official child friendly version of the Convention.

The 30th anniversary is also our chance to take stock of progress and challenges. It is a chance to set in motion the further strengthening of the child rights movement in our changing global context where human rights are increasingly under threat. Child Rights Connect will maximize its unique position to facilitate strategic and critical reflections about challenges and achievements of civil society child rights advocacy and engagement with the CRC Committee reporting process.

Finally, we want to remind everyone that 2019 is also the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the Optional Protocol on a Communication Procedure. As the NGO who has been leading the advocacy around the drafting and adoption of this Optional Protocol, Child Rights Connect is planning to boost the ratification campaign by facilitating exchanges of good practices between States and impulse State-led advocacy for ratification. The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary is an opportunity that we cannot miss to change the narrative around ratification to make it more good practices-based and strengthen the message that OPIC is an essential tool for States to improve the implementation of the Convention at national level.

We look forward to discussing more in-depth with you about this and more during the session and we thank you for the attention.