



## **Child Rights Connect statement**

### **Opening of the online 87th session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 17 May 2021**

Distinguished members of the Committee, representatives of UN agencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I take this opportunity to welcome the newly elected and re-elected members of the Committee. The Child Rights Connect Network and Secretariat has enjoyed an open and constructive working relationship with the Committee and we look forward to continuing this with you all in the days and years to come. I also wish to thank the outgoing Chair, Luis Pedernera, for his leadership of the Committee during a challenging period.

Child Rights Connect welcomes this online session, in particular the efforts made to hold the online State reviews of Luxembourg and Tunisia. This is an important step in addressing the accountability gap that has ensued through the lack of in-person meetings of the Committee. It reinforces the need to ensure that States are called to account in their obligation to implement the Convention. In this way, the Committee is also taking positive steps to resolve the decreased attention to children during the pandemic. We call on the Committee to build on this approach. We call on those that support its work and functioning to do everything possible to allow the Committee to catch up on the backlog in undertaking State party reviews.

We remain concerned about the implications of the UN financial crisis on resources for all of the UN treaty bodies, including the impact of the regular budget freeze on human resources needed to support the Committee and to respond to the greater workload of the OHCHR in adapting to, and addressing the cumulative consequences of, the pandemic. We stand ready to support efforts to allow for an effective recovery from the impact of the pandemic on the full implementation of the Convention and the ability of civil society, especially children, to meaningfully engage with the Committee. In that regard, we hope that thought can be given to following up with children that had engaged with the Committee during the extraordinary outreach session in Samoa.

Reflecting on the first few months of this year, and our plans in the coming months, I take the opportunity to draw the Committee's attention to:

- a) The last Annual Day on the Rights of the Child on the Sustainable Development Goals, held in March, included the Committee's participation, together with that of child human rights defenders. It was instrumental to reinforce States' obligation to apply a child rights approach in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as the Committee's role in ensuring accountability. For the first time, the Annual Day of the Human Rights Council will inform New York based processes, namely the upcoming High Level Political Forum and the resolution of the General Assembly on child rights. This is a unique opportunity to strengthen synergies between Geneva and New York and achieve greater State and UN commitments, in particular to child rights mainstreaming and access to justice.
- b) With regard to child rights mainstreaming, we draw your attention to the call by the European Union – during the Annual Day – for the UN to “adopt a system-wide approach to ensuring the centrality of children's rights in all of its action”. This echoes the call by Child Rights Connect for a UN-wide child rights strategy, made in the framework of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention. We encourage the Committee to support these calls.
- c) Concerning access to justice, we regret to say that while SDG16 has helped to draw international attention to the issue we continue to see major gaps when it comes to access to justice for children. Many stakeholders still focus their work only on children who are in contact with the justice system. In comparison, very little is done concerning the right to effective remedies and reparation for children who are victims of human rights violations. We encourage the Committee to take further steps to

address these gaps, including by making use of existing advocacy opportunities in 2021, such as the High Level Political Forum and the World Congress on Access to Justice.

We remain committed to supporting the Committee, and children's and broader civil society's meaningful and effective engagement with you, and stand ready to respond to your questions and requests.

I thank you.

Alex Conte  
Executive Director  
**child rights connect**