



**Child Rights Connect statement**  
**Opening of the online 89th session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child**  
**31 January 2022**

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

While we welcome to see that the Committee members could travel to Geneva to hold an in-person session, we want to express on behalf of civil society our concerns about the last-minute cancellation of the first two weeks of the 89<sup>th</sup> session and the significant decrease in the number of State reviews. This is particularly worrying given the increasing backlog and the negative impact of the pandemic on the advocacy work of civil society, including children. As we look ahead to the May-June session, we call on the Committee and OHCHR to explore all possible ways to catch up on the worrying backlog and communicate all possible scenarios in a timely manner so that civil society can have an idea of what to expect. This will enable them to engage effectively in the CRC reporting process and maximize their impact at the national level. We have raised these concerns in a private letter to the Committee and we look forward to discussing it further.

We take this opportunity to share with the Committee important news about child rights mainstreaming. Following the 2020 high level panel on child rights mainstreaming at the Human Rights Council – during which the Committee raised concerns about gaps at the UN level – we engaged the UN Secretary-General by issuing a [position paper](#) in response to his report last year on “Our Common Agenda”. Just four weeks after submission of the position paper, which was endorsed by 100 organisations, his Office informed us that the SG had decided to develop a Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming in the framework of his Call to Action for Human Rights. This is a welcome first step to start addressing the lack of a system-wide approach to child rights in the UN and develop more effective guidance for all UN bodies and agencies on how to systematically apply a child rights approach to their work. The need for this was something stressed by UN member States through the last General Assembly resolution on the rights of the child.

Civil society is currently waiting for information about the inter-agency process that will lead to the drafting and publication of the Guidance Note. We are calling for the process to be transparent, participatory and inclusive so that the Guidance Note is informed by the views of all relevant stakeholders, including children, civil society, States and UN entities. We believe that the Committee should play an active role in that process by providing expert advice on the content of the Guidance Note. We see this as an important means of pursuing implementation of General Comment N°5 on general measures of implementation, among others. We look forward to supporting the inter-agency process and collaborating with the Committee, including by mobilizing and supporting the engagement of children and civil society organisations.

Finally, I am happy to inform you that the Ombudsperson in Moldova is calling for a new comprehensive law on human rights defenders with a specific chapter on children, to be developed with the help of our Implementation Guide on child human rights defenders, to which the Committee contributed. We will dedicate efforts to support this process with a view to achieving the first ever law on human rights defenders that effectively mainstreams children’s rights.

I thank you.

Ilaria Paolazzi  
Deputy Director  
**child rights connect**