

**Committee on the Rights of the Child – 89th session  
Opening of the session, 31 January 2022**

**UNICEF statement**

Madam Chair, dear Committee members, dear colleagues,

Many thanks for this opportunity to provide you with some updates of UNICEF's work of direct relevance to the work of the Committee.

In our last update in September, we were telling you about our plans to look into the issue of policing assemblies in which children are taking part. This work has now started, and we are developing a document articulating the various dimensions of policing assemblies involving children, to inform guidance on the topic. An Advisory Group has been established and already met twice. We are grateful to have two Committee members accompanying this process, along with the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the SRSG VAC and experts in human rights, child rights or policing from all regions. We are also collecting the views of children who have taken part in assemblies, through FGD in 11 countries.

The development of guidance on child rights legislative reform in partnership with the University of Leiden is also under way, and in this case too we are grateful to have Committee members taking part in the Advisory Group. The result of this work will be a website providing guidance to States, UN entities and civil society on how best to carry out child rights legislative reform – in terms of both substance and process. We hope that this will be a useful resource for the many States that receive recommendations for legislative changes from the Committee.

We are also continuously beefing up our internal website guiding the reporting process, and hope to add this year specific guidance on the issues of children's access to justice on the one hand, and child marriage on the other. As part of the same initiative, you also have received the questionnaire informing enhanced guidance on Public Finance for Children reporting.

Among the other priorities of the Human Rights Unit this year, are also research and the preparation of programmatic recommendations on Child Rights and Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sex Characteristics on the one hand, and on child rights and hate speech on the other. We have also started a process to update the CRC Implementation Handbook and **we will be reaching out to you for consultations in this respect.**

We continue to actively work with the missions on pushing back the push back that we have been referring to in our last updates, and to engage with all the human rights mechanisms in view of elevating child rights in the various debates and resolutions. We are looking forward to our CRC/UNICEF Biennial meeting later this year (hopefully in May) and hope to agree on ways to jointly address the threats facing child rights today. You will also be interested to know that 90% of the UNICEF country offices have reported work in support of the implementation of the CRC concluding observations in 2021.

Finally, we would like to share that this year, we are starting to work under a new Strategic Plan (2022-2025) that, as the previous ones, is guided by the CRC. The Strategic Plan acknowledges that the human rights of children are under threat to a degree that has not been seen in more than a generation.

The Plan will guide synchronized action towards an inclusive recovery from COVID-19, acceleration towards the achievement of the SDGs and the attainment of a society in which every child is included, without discrimination, and has agency, opportunity and their rights fulfilled. It was informed by voices of children (200,000 children gave their views), communities, governments, UN sister agencies, private sector, civil society and other partners. The SP is very much a continuation of the previous one, with the main changes being in terms of new or accelerated approaches on climate action, mental health and social protection.

In closing, while we fully appreciate the efforts made by the Committee to deliver on its mandate despite difficult circumstances, I wish to also convey UNICEF's concern over the cancellation of most of the dialogues with State parties in this session. We worry about the impact that this decision has on the credibility and timeliness of the reporting process itself, as well as on the national child rights strategies and plans that were designed with the timing of the session in mind. We hope that the Committee will find ways to further build trust and revive engagement in the concerned countries and, as always, stand ready to support.

We wish you all the best for the session, and look forward to continuing partnering with you, as well as with civil society and other UN entities.

Thank you.