



## THE BRAZILIAN CHILDREN'S CONFERENCE OF THE MILLENNIUM, CHILDREN'S AGENDA AND THE WORLD

### **A report on the Third Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on Childhood**

**Place:** The General Assembly of the United Nations – UN Headquarters,  
New York.

**Date:** 11 to 15 June, 2001.

**Agenda:** A discussion of the Draft Proposals and action for the establishment by the UN in September, 2001, of an agenda to make visible and strengthen childhood and for the implementation of the Convention on Children's Rights in the world and in each individual country.

### **Background**

Around the middle of the twentieth century, a culture of dialogue among nations was installed to set up a new order, a new balance and a new plan for world social relationships directed by sustainable development. On the one hand, it is directed towards balancing the positive relationship of the direction between technical, scientific, industrial, atomic and nuclear knowledge of serious environmental impact and the tolerance limits of values, necessities and the conditions of the environment and of humanity as a basis for sustaining life and the planet. And, on the other hand, for a positive equation between human and economic, non-industrial, non-financial cultural values with cultural and economic values of the market and competition, regulated by industry and financial capital.

This process grew out of the scientific movement of the atomic scientists, led by Einstein, in 1945 and which was fully instituted after the cycle of great international conferences begun by the UN in 1972 with the Stockholm Conference. This made way for two great action plans around the world social direction of the nations, both of which were carried out and have since been sustained under the coordination of the UN system:

- a) the **Global Agenda 21**, on the environment and human relations, and

- b) the **Habitat Agenda**, treating of human settlements and their environmental and social relationships.

These two agendas can be considered nowadays as the register of the direction of the world order at regional, national and international levels. All the larger conferences and conventions held since and after these two agendas have been directly related or related through government, life and the relationship between the nations.

They represent two of the three principal constitutive elements of the direction and action of the new world order. The third element which has still not been systematized, refers to the set of the metaphysical, ethical, communitarian direction of the religious, philosophical, social and cultural order of the nations which is related to these two.

One of the conventions ratified and related to the field of direction of these agendas is the Convention on Children's Rights, set up by the World Leaders for Children in 1989 and ratified by the nations who belong to the UN System, among them Brazil, in 1990. Through this convention and its consolidation through Agenda 21, ratified in 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, afterwards by the Habitat Agenda, ratified in 1996, in Istanbul, in recent years children have been at the center of several initiatives of national governments connected to the UN System and today are treated in international circles as the main human and social resource to be defended, assisted and promoted by the nations as a basis for the national and international order.

Our presence in the official forums of the UN (General Assembly Sessions) and in the non-governmental forums, related to them, and our positions within these forums, is directly connected to the interests of the world's children, especially Brazilian, presented at this convention and in Chapter 25 of Agenda 21.

We have taken up the Brazilian Children's Conference for the Millennium – CCBM, detailed in the document drawn up at the first session, called the Goiânia Declaration, and have tried to respond to the commitments made with the children through this declaration by all those who signed it and by the organizations which today make up the Brazilian Children's Agenda 21 Organizational and Implementation Committee and the second session of the



CCBM (information in the site [www.ccbm.com.br](http://www.ccbm.com.br) ). We are asking for everybody's help in this.

The present session of the Preparatory Committee was held as a continuation of the UN Discussion Draft (Preliminary Action Project) drawn up for the vitalization of the implementation of the Children's Rights Convention and for the positive inclusion of children in the process of establishing a world order – a document drawn up in the last two substantial sessions of the Preparatory Committee of the Children's General Assembly, which is being collectively established since its first formulation sustained by the UN.

This session incorporated into the draft the most relevant recommendations and action of the earlier discussion period on the implementation process of the convention and inclusion of children in the world order. With different discussion groups, it also established new guidelines, directed towards dill. vitalizing, sustaining or changing the recommendations and programs for action already approved within the establishment of a Children's Agenda for the Third Millennium. The event comprises various regional and international discussion forums – Latin American; Asiatic; African; European – various represented national forums and various general discussion groups divided into approximately 50 to 60 discussion panels a day involving a broad range of questions presented by the Children's Rights Convention and the Agendas 21 and Habitat recommendations on children and their development.

Delegations from 109 countries and about 375 registered NGOs totaling about 1200 people participated in this session.

The main theme of the Draft is the implementation of the Children's Rights Convention whose content could be summed up in three directions: Protection; Provision and Child Participation within the local and international World Order of Nations.

The first of these directions included the items for the measures, mechanisms, and social laws against child exploitation - sexual, intellectual, labor, etc. – promoting their global assistance in special situations; the second contains the items for social assistance guaranteeing children food, housing, leisure, health assistance, education, and participation in social life; and the third contains

items of support and appeal to children to exercise creativity and communitarian communion, citizenship and social responsibility.

In order to discuss these items and their implementation, the Preparatory Committee invited authorities, specialists, academics, technical representatives from the private sector, communities and non-governmental bodies to discuss the setting up of the children's plan for social approach and interests in the New World Order, defined as a Children's Agenda for the Third Millennium. Many studies are under consideration according to the themes proposed in the draft and the norms specified by the UN. It would seem that themes other than those specified can be examined, on condition that they are related to the specific objective of the implementation of the Children's Rights Convention and to the related Agendas 21 and Habitat items.

The issue of childhood has been discussed for a long time in judgeships and attorney's offices and various national, social and economic forums of civil society. But only in recent years, more specifically since 1995, when UNEP initiated a cycle of children's international forums (UNEP held three in partnership with national and international bodies, the last in 2000, a conference called "Tomorrow's Leaders", at Disney World whose participants were funded by multinational companies, of whom MacDonal'd's was one.. A fourth such event will be held by UNEP in 2002) have children been treated as a strategic factor and fundamental element in the process of the strengthening of nations and in their sociability within the international community and in the establishment of a planetary order.

The UN Special Session on Children in September, 2001, will mark position in the process of setting up international cultural unity by means of the social organization of nations with children.

### **The Process – the relator's report**

The process is still in its initial stages. In the studies of this session of the Assembly's Preparatory Committee, children's problems in relation to illness (especially HIV), sexual abuse, child labor and conflicts (as with Palestinian Children) and social problems, which leave children in isolation because of repeated systemic accidents as in Armenia, are shown and incorporated into

requests for support for different causes, which in fact, gain force because their subject is the child and because of the impact their situation has on the sensitivity and social imagination of nations and because of the as-not-yet-very-clear perception of what their wellbeing or the opposite represents for national and international human relations and human social quality.

Within in this context, having as their basis the discourse and aim of implementation of the convention, requests and studies from all the countries are being considered in order to be taken to the UN General Assembly – some such studies have been catalogued to serve as models for the nations and have been defined as “the best practices”.

We participated in many discussion panels, observed their contents and every day we studied the developing Draft. It was observed that at this time, ten to eleven years after the Children’s Rights Convention, it is clear that there are brilliant initiatives, proposals and requests related to the field of Childhood Protection and Provision brought about in response to the analyses and conditions of the above-mentioned problems.

What was noted principally was the lack of proposal and action plan for the promotion and guarantee of child participation in the structure of the local and international order of nations. In this area is concentrated the most inclusive and less fragmented items of the convention and the Agendas 21 and Habitat – precisely those items which concern children’s rights to free speech, association and organization, their responsibility and social conditions for reproducing and developing their own culture and creating a culture of pacifist international relations, based on Human Rights, Agendas 21 and Habitat and the Superior Principles of their families, religions and intellectual and social, political and economic authorities.

Such items compliment those of protection and provision of the convention and interact with them for the formation of the continuity of national communities and the development of an international community sustained by the generations and the system of the educational relation of the life and popular, communitarian global culture – sensual, emotional, geopsychological, environmental, physical, and social rural, industrial, technical and scientific. Indeed, the field of participation is an extremely important one which demands a plan of systemization if it is to be

implemented. However, it is true that in relation to this governments and non-governmental organizations' responses are still very timid.

The projects and requests seen in this field still do not have a basis of organization sustained by children with adults under a common direction. Today they are based on a growing number of experiences of Children's Parliaments, such as that of Morocco, which presented its Children's Parliament Charter during the event; on children's councils founded to participate in public administration decision processes, such as those of Switzerland, France and Italy and on children's clubs such as IBAMA's turtle club in Brazil, founded by adults for children.

All of these projects were established as a positive response on the part of the environmental education movement which is responsible in different parts of the world for an advance in social conscience for ecological management beyond market and competition economic values. All represent, to a lesser or greater degree an encouraging irreversible movement towards the setting up of a children's social organization as a potential solution based on adult social organization. And all have been proposed by people who, while continuing to give children the basic assistance they need, and without undervaluing these services, refuse to see children as a problem and a market for protection and special care measures which are evermore isolating, expensive and ineffective.

But, for the time being, the movement for children's participation in the processes of the establishment and social organization of the life and community and social values of the nations and of the international order have not yet been systematized. It has been merely registered as a right within the convention.

In practice, the convention itself, as well as the nations' environmental education policies, are primordially being treated within the perspective of protection and not as a support base of education for the organization and social responsibility of all, to such a degree that the draft proposes the protection of protection, or in other words, the protection of children's rights, and, therefore, of the convention.

### **Brazil's Participation**

We saw Brazil's well drawn-up report presented by the head of the Brazilian delegation in the commission of the Ambassador Gilberto Vergne Saboia, Secretary of State for Human Rights, official representative of the President whom I personally congratulated on his work. As well as that, Brazil officially presented only measures in the areas of children's protection and provision, although the country has many initiatives in the field of participation. What is positive is that in the areas of protection and provision we have, perhaps, the best Children and Adolescents' Statute drawn up by any country (that is, from our point of view) and an excellent education service with an elaborate program and work in the field of environmental education being carried out by its secretariats for education and the environment, its schools and teaching and social assistance institutes.

### **Analysis of the process**

The centralization of the focus for action in the field of children's protection and provision is situational. This is due to the fact that our lives and those of our children are being affected, unbalanced and disorganized by a devastating number of emergency problems and needs which necessitate an immediate protection and provision response.

What can be seen throughout the whole process is that the international situation is a great struggle on behalf of the defense and policing of children and civil society in its relation to children against the most varied and crushing indexes of social marginality and of health produced by national and international communities and groups in armed conflicts, phenomenological environmental reactions, such as the seismic disturbances in Armenia, unrestrained industrialization, chemical and biological weapons, market and competition economic pressures on consumption, life and social work, trafficking in people, organs and drugs, globalization etc. And in this struggle, it is very clear that we, as well as children, are not nearly organized enough to undertake action for an approach to overcoming the problems and bringing about the ecological and social objectives in the plan for formation and grassroots social organization.

We are still very preoccupied with organizing reactions of defending life against the growing forces of destruction which continue to increase within the system despite our defense. The idea of action applied to the word and idea of “protection” appears specified 52 times in the session discussion draft. As well as this idea and work, four other ideas and words form the documents basis for action: namely, combat, elimination, reduction and provision. At no time does the word ‘organization’ appear as applied to the action of children’s relations and those of society with the children. But it is quite likely that this is the new line of action that will give force to our efforts at protection and our capacity to provision.

I conclude that world leadership lacks a ballast capable of promoting the systemic operationalization of children’s participation in world social organization and the relating and bringing about of the establishment of the social organization and the unity of children’s cultural diversity and their interests with directives capable of disconnecting the cycle of evolution and development of the marginalizing phenomena that confront us – such a ballast is specifically a structure for a programatic and constitutive relation of the children’s community capable of promoting and linking every type of children’s association and organization, possible and imaginable, with guidelines for prevention in health and the overcoming of stimuli and the agents which generate delinquent phenomena. This structure, in turn, must be build with the participation and integration of the children’s global leadership, as articulated in assembly, in a pact with adult global leadership as expressed by the nations in their own conventions and constitutive bodies.

## **Conclusion**

Against this background, I think that what we have asked of the UN and the international community could become significant: the inclusion in the UN project of the Children’s Agenda for the Third Millennium, of a Children’s Agenda 21 Preliminary Project as a basis for the articulation and implementation of a cultural ballast for the association and organization of children in clubs and club networks or children’s unions starting from schools, neighborhoods or condominiums.

We offered and distributed The Children’s Agenda 21 Preliminary Project for prior discussion and through our participation in the various discussion groups



we tried to introduce some points for reflection on children's social organization into this session's Draft of the Preparatory Commission of the Assembly on Children.

Our principal point of defense was that all schools, families, and social communities, neighborhood associations and condominiums in cities should consider the promotion of children's association and organization as a fundamental part of the continuity of culture, of children's social security and development. Whether our suggestions were successful or not, we will only know as the process develops. However, we did notice that our suggestion made a positive impression, leading to the following remark in the NGO's alternative text, of revision of the final document draft: "we will support the establishment and participation of children's organizations, recognizing the developing capacity for children to plan, monitor and report themselves" Item 56, last paragraph of the NGO's alternative draft.

On the other hand, our work was seen by the official Brazilian representation, especially by Brazil's permanent Mission Secretariat in New York and by representatives of the Ministry's for the Environment, Justice and Education who were there and with whom we had contact. We would hope to be able to count on them for the Brazilian Children's Agenda 21 Project and for their help in taking an official representation of children to participate in the General Assembly's Special Session on Children.

Our participation ended with the June 14<sup>th</sup> session and now we are waiting for our contacts to move the process on.

On returning to Brazil our first step was to launch the organization and implementation of the Children's Agenda 21 in Niterói-RJ on June 18. It was coordinated by Niterói's Environment Secretariat and presented by its partners gathered in assembly who had already adhered to the Preliminary Project as proposed by the CCBM. The next steps are the launching of the Children's Agenda 21 in Goiânia, on Monday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, in the *Teatro Inacabado*, then from the 7-9 September the holding of the CCBM at the Marist College, Goiânia. Then we will try to launch the Children's Agenda 21 in other states by means of the channels of communication that the partners or other supportive institutes or social organizations and movements open up and offer us. We will try to set up public debates on how to bring about the



establishment of children's clubs; on what to do so that the children will bring about the Children's Agenda 21 and draw up the statutes of the clubs directly related to it; on how they can find partners, investors, multipliers and representatives of political parties, national and international governments with whom they can set up different types of project in accordance with the Children's Agenda 21. We would hope to count on the interest, solidarity and personal effort of all – churches, schools, universities, NGOs, media and neighborhood associations – who can hold meetings where the subject will be put up for discussion inviting us and providing ways for us to present it.

Sincerely,

Divino Roberto Veríssimo

Commission Coordinator and President of the Cultural Integration Movement  
for World Economy and Energy and Executive Director of the Organization  
for Environmental Preservation.