Friday, 20 November 2015

**Statement of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the 26th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Today, 20 November 2015, marks Universal Children’s Rights Day and the 26th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It is a time for celebration, as well as an opportunity to reflect on the various challenges that children’s rights, and in effect, children, continue to face in what is ever more a turbulent world.

Yet, we must embrace the 196th ratification of the CRC by Somalia on 1 October 2015, a testament to the global nature of the Convention. We must also redouble our efforts to accelerate the ratification of the three optional protocols to the Convention for the benefit of our children.

While the Committee notes general progress in how the Convention is being enforced in various thematic areas there remain some wide variations in its implementation with some disturbing trends. For instance, discrimination, both *de jure* and *de facto*, against girls, children with disabilities, children from ethnic, racial and religious minorities, children in poverty, and non-national and stateless children, remains a serious challenge. So do lack of birth registration, and violence that is still widespread, including sexual and other forms of exploitation such as child marriage and trafficking.

The Committee is also increasingly considering new and evolving issues. These include the negative effects of climate change as well as the impact of austerity measures that target investment in social services but that do not comply with international human rights standards. In addition, while digital media and the internet make positive contributions to children’s rights, they also can pose risks and potential harm, such as child pornography and bullying.

Terrorism, its impact on children’s life and development, and, in some instances, the various responses to it that do not comply with human rights standards, are a dire concern. The current migration crisis and its significant impact on children cannot be over-emphasised. In relation to children in conflict with the law, the Committee is following developments in a number of countries where some bills and laws are being introduced that do not advance the object and purposes of the Convention. Such legislation often reduces the minimum age of criminal responsibility below an internationally acceptable standard, impose harsh penalties on children, and/or deprive adequate substantive or procedural protection to all children below 18 years. In this regard, the United Nations is now undertaking a Global Study on children deprived of liberty following a request by the General Assembly. The Committee encourages all States parties to support the Global Study with adequate resources and information.

In all these challenges, the right of the child to have her or his best interests taken as a primary consideration should serve as the underlying obligation upon which all laws, policies, and services must hinge. A universal implementation of the Convention indeed has the potential to create a world fit for children in the foreseeable future - as long as all States, independently and collectively, embrace the Convention and make it the centre of all their activities for and with children.

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For more information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, see:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>