

Save the Children – Submission to the Peacebuilding Commission’s Ministerial Meeting

Save the Children welcomes the Secretary-General’s recent “New Agenda for Peace” policy brief and the Peacebuilding Commission’s timely initiatives to bolster multilateral cooperation and address emerging challenges in building and sustaining peace.

The “New Agenda for Peace” policy brief establishes strong principles and recommendations for action; however, we regret to note that children are not explicitly mentioned in the document. Children make up roughly half of the world’s population—in conflict settings they experience unique protection risks and have unique needs for support. Children also play an integral role in peacebuilding. Their participation enhances the legitimacy of peace initiatives, helps to break cycles of violence, and ensures long-term peace and security. A recent Save the Children study on children’s participation in peace processes documented children’s demands to be involved in peacebuilding and made practical suggestions about how they could engage in a safe and meaningful manner.

As the PBC secretariat discusses the New Agenda going forward, we hope that Member States will work to enshrine children’s rights, protection, and participation more clearly. In particular, it will be important to reinforce and complement the 2016 IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, which affirms that all humanitarian actors have a responsibility to place protection at the centre of their interventions. For the New Agenda to achieve its ambitions, it must also have strong linkages to existing frameworks working on protection at both the national and international levels.

While we understand the New Agenda for Peace is intended to be succinct and usable, by omitting more specific language on children the policy brief misses an important opportunity to compliment and strengthen existing mechanisms within the UN’s Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) Agenda and the work of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. During the PBC Ministerial meeting, we urge Member States to support stronger integration and linkages with the existing CAAC infrastructure, so that the New Agenda for peace may achieve the greatest possible impact.

In any efforts to build and sustain peace, it is also important to ensure that Member State sanctions and counter-terror regimes do not negatively impact children’s ability to access principled humanitarian support and have their rights protected. We urge Member States and the UN system to prioritize humanitarian access and space in any counterterror initiatives.