



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

9 April 2020

Excellency,

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/301, it is my pleasure to transmit the enclosed summary of key messages that emerged from the High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was convened on 20 November 2019.

I thank you for your delegation's commitment to the advancement of the rights of the child and for your contribution towards making the High-level meeting a success.

I avail of this opportunity to express my solidarity with Member States who are fighting COVID-19 and extend my sincere condolences for their loss.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'T' followed by a flourish and a circular mark.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child held at the General Assembly Hall and Trusteeship Council Chamber on 20 November 2019.

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

Background

Pursuant to Resolution 73/301, the President of the General Assembly on 20 November 2019, organized a High-Level Meeting to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The meeting was held against the backdrop of the realization that since the adoption of the Convention, which is the most ratified human rights treaty in history, lives of millions of children have been improved through the progressive realization of rights and fulfilment of obligations enshrined in the Convention and its Optional Protocols. Children are recognized as individual rights-holders, with the additional rights to special protections and safeguards from the duty-bearers in their lives and communities.

More specifically is the reality that since 1989, children have a higher chance of surviving and thriving because of the progress made in child health, nutrition, education and protection. But despite this significant progress, millions of children still face obstacles in the full realization of their rights. Multiple challenges to childhood that were not envisaged some 30 years ago are now confronting children globally. For instance, in 1989, there was no world wide web shaping young lives; issues of children's privacy and identity were seldom discussed; forced migration did not affect children and young people on the massive scale seen today; and the impact of a changing climate was not as urgent or as well understood.

The event drew participants from all UN member states, UN Agencies, regional and international organizations, civil society groups and academia, including 1986 Nobel Laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka. It also witnessed the participation of children and young people around the globe who shared their experiences about the greatest opportunities and challenges facing them. Child participants also shared their innovative ideas to improve their communities and achieve a more prosperous, sustainable and equal world. towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The objectives

The objectives of the meeting were to:

1. Celebrate the milestones and successes of the Convention, since its ratification, in transforming the lives of millions of children all around the world for the past thirty years;

2. Acknowledge the re-commitments made by world leaders at the global and national levels, to uphold the Convention with full consideration to the challenges and opportunities posed by the 21st century, in particular focusing on the issues of climate change; education; protracted conflict and humanitarian crises; and children being left behind;
3. Provide a platform for children to meaningfully share their views and perspectives as the experts on the challenges they face, and opportunities they see for the realization of their rights, and for world leaders to meaningfully engage with children;
4. Connect celebrations across the globe to show the unity of children acting together, with the support of decision-makers;
5. Inspire participants to consider how collective and concerted action from all sectors to prioritize the realization of child rights will be critical for the achievement of the SDGs, and for results that uphold and progress the rights of the 21st century child.

PGA Message

His Excellency, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, in his message at the occasion remarked that the adoption of the Convention was a milestone in the global efforts to landmark children as rights holders. He pointed out that policies and concrete actions that were taken to fully implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child had led to higher child survival rates due to the progressive realization of rights and fulfillment of obligations enshrined in the Convention; namely in relation to health, nutrition, education, and protection. He noted that despite the progress, global community still needs to do more given the sad reality that not every child enjoys his or her childhood. He underscored the fact that millions of children today continue to face obstacles in realizing their rights to the most basic social services including adequate healthcare, education and protection from violence. In particular, he stressed the need for collective efforts to reach zero hunger and achieve nutrition for all by ending childhood obesity and stunting; the latter of which affects one in five children worldwide.

He also opined that the world was facing a crisis of learning, hence, the need to radically improve equal access to quality education for children everywhere. He described as scandalous the current estimates that showed that some 265 million children were currently out of school and called for the removal of all barriers to education by ensuring, at a minimum, universal access to basic education for every child, everywhere. He called on the global community to ensure access to education, noted that global community can ensure qualitative education for every child.

As a response to the rapidly and ever more complex world, the PGA advocated for the integration of ICT into school curricula so that young people are not just literate, but

digitally literate, nothing that those skills were essential to future success and full engagement in society. PGA also raised concerns about the stark reality of digital gender gap and remarked that today one billion girls and women lacked the skills to succeed in an increasingly digital world, including expertise through the study of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. He called for the prioritization of the girl-child among national priorities, especially as a total of 650 million girls, globally, were reported to have been married before attaining the age of 18. He stressed the imperative of encouraging girls to stay in school and attain necessary capacity for mental and human capacity development.

He mentioned that congruent to above was the need to provide second chance education programmes, sanitation facilities and safe path to school for our girls. According to him, while inaccessibility constitutes one problem, another major problem is quality. He lamented that more than half of the students who were currently enrolled in school are not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics and that the situation was more pronounced and acute in poorer countries and in countries experiencing conflict. Also, he underscored that, of the children who were out of school, one in four lived in crises-affected countries including those affected by the climate emergency.

PGA mentioned further that there were more countries experiencing violent conflict than there had been since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. He called on member states to ensure that the international humanitarian law was upheld and that schools were never a target. He remarked that we must ensure that all efforts are made to work towards Target 16.2 of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development which calls on Member States to “...end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children”.

Ms. Herrieta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director

In her own remarks at the event, Ms. Herrieta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director noted that achievements the world had made since the Convention was signed were undeniable, She remarked that “.....more children are in school than ever before. "More are vaccinated — and getting the health care they need, closer to where they live. "Rates of child marriage and open defecation are falling. "And best of all — more children are living past their fifth birthdays than at any moment in history.

She emphasized that the task was not just to celebrate the Convention but accelerate progress for children’s rights in the next 30 years and finish work stated in 1989 especially as millions of children around the world, especially from the poorest were still not getting vaccinations, nutrition’s, and education they needed. She also noted that millions were living through the horrors of conflicts — seeing their homes, schools and local hospitals destroyed and watching helplessly as their families and friends were injured or killed, as well as making the long, perilous journeys to safety in neighboring countries.

Ms. Virginia Gimba, SRSG on Children in Armed Conflicts

Also, in her own remarks, Ms. Virginia Gamba, SRSG on Children in Armed Conflicts, stated that concern for children's rights and their protection had brought world leaders together in 1989 to make a historical commitment to children and adopt a common standard around which to rally. She noted that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was, however, much more than a human rights convention for the protection of children and the fulfillment of their rights but recognition that children, including those affected by armed conflict, were holders of human rights and should be considered not only as objects of protection but also as individuals who can be agents of change by exercising their rights.

UNRWA

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in a report sent to the occasion reflected on the impact of its assistance to the children of Gaza, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. It noted that the CRC's promise to children was underscored by living in safety, protection from violence, discrimination and abuse, and enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. The Agency stated that the past 70 years had witnessed UNRWA various developmental efforts which had directly improved the wellbeing of many Palestine refugee children. Accordingly, over half a million students received quality education in schools run by the Agency. It noted that Palestine refugee children within the UNRWA areas of operation had nearly a 100 per cent vaccination rate, the Agency had continuously improved its support for children with disabilities and empowered children through its student parliaments program in UNRWA schools.

Mr. David Beckham, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

David Beckham, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador mentioned that despite numerous highlighted achievements of the Convention, much still needed to be done. He remarked inter alia that: ..."As leaders, as public figures, as parents and, as human beings, we must all do more to protect children's dreams... "Because the future doesn't belong to us, it belongs to children... "Like every parent, I've tried to teach my children about the world.... "To share the values that I was taught as a child... "To help my kids find their own passion and purpose in life.... "To help them learn what is right and what is wrong.

Some Cross-Cutting events at the High-Level Meeting

Interlinkages with Sustainable Development Goals

The high-level meeting further addressed the interlinkages between the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the CRC. Many participants observed that Child rights are integrated throughout the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Participants and Member States alike illustrated how the CRC and

Agenda 2030 go hand in hand. While the Convention highlights the timeless and indispensable international standards for ensuring the realization of the rights of every child, the SDGs articulate a timebound vision for achieving sustainable social, economic and environmental progress that can be achieved when all people, including children, work together for our peaceful, prosperous and secure future. The commemoration of CRC highlighted best practices and gaps for the international community to ensure no child is left behind in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Goals.

Key Messages

The key messages from various stakeholders that attended the meeting could be highlighted as follows:

- The High-level meeting recognized that while progress had been made through CRC, the situation of children was still critical in many parts of the world and many challenges still impinging the full realization of their rights. In this regard, the high-level participants and other stakeholders utilized the occasion of the meeting to reflect on implementation gaps and additional measures to ensure children's rights are realized through traditional, new, and emerging sectors and situations pertinent to the lives of children.
- The meeting called for bold action by governments, civil society, the private sector, academic institutions, the UN system, and children themselves; including support for every child to reach their full potential in fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The meeting witnessed re-commitment by member states to upholding and protecting the rights and principles enshrined within the Convention, as a legal framework to inform policies, laws, budgets and programs to advance progress for and with all children. Participants committed to reflecting and identifying concrete, actionable and time-bound steps towards the full implementation of the CRC, including within the context of national implementation of the SDGs in respective national contexts.
- Due attention was also given to vulnerable children including those who face discrimination and exclusion based on income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other relevant characteristics; gender-based violence including FGM and child marriage; the enduring impact conflict, forced migration and displacement has on child development; children without parental care; and children who need access to justice or are in the juvenile justice system.
- In implementing the mandate of meaningful child participation, child participants from across the world called on member states to take urgent action towards the realization of their rights and presented their ideas and views for intergenerational solidarity on this issue. This includes the right to digital protection and safeguarding procedures to ensure that era of information and

communication technology has a positive impact on children's lives and does not subject more children to violence, abuse and exploitation.

- The event reiterated the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to deliver on child rights and the SDGs including the private sector and civil society. All participants also recognized that children and youth themselves are essential stakeholders in this multi-stakeholder partnership. Children representatives specifically called upon decision-makers to ensure that decisions that affect children's lives must include children in discussions and debates leading to such decisions.
- Finally, the high-level meeting called for the normative institutionalization of meaningful child participation so as to promote minimum standards and procedures within the UN systems, including in its official meetings, so that the UN system can systematically support efforts in implementing meaningful child participation in global deliberations and decision-making processes.

Conclusion

In the lead up to the high-level meeting on 30th anniversary of the convention, an informal Group of Friends of Children and SDGs, involving all interested members states was formed at the UN. The three co-chairs of the Group -- the Ambassadors of Luxembourg, Bulgaria and Jamaica, in their national capacities-- launched a voluntary global pledge "*For every child, every right.*" To date, 109 Member State have alignments to the pledge. The pledge reaffirmed commitments to the CRC and gave credence to the importance of including genuine children's perspectives in the development and assessment of strategies and programmes that are designed to realize their rights and meet their specific and evolving needs.

The high-level meeting clearly landmarked the CRC@30 and ensured that member states re-commit themselves to the principles inherent in the Convention and provide actionable methods towards incorporating those priorities that were clearly beyond the purview of the Convention when it was formulated and signed in 1989.

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