Committee on the Rights of the Child

27 February 2025

High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2025

CRC Contribution

« Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science-and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind »

The Committee on the Rights of the Child welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the HLPF 2025. This contribution will focus on SDGs **3, 5 & 17**

1. Assessment of the impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5 and 17

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, when examining the reports of the States parties, noted differentiated results according to the States, but a trend that is emerging with difficulties in accessing to health care; to education and the persistence of multiple inequalities against girls, barriers to their empowerment, resulting in gender-based violence, including sexual violence leading to early pregnancies and impacting their rights. This situation is exacerbated in situations of armed conflict or serious urban violence.

The current situation has been marked by an increase in conflicts and serious violations of children's rights in conflict situations. One in five children still lives in a conflict zone. Nearly half a billion children are currently living in conflict zones around the world, including in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in particular the Gaza strip, the Syrian Arab Republic, Somalia, Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen, which is twice as many as in 1990.

The Committee is particularly concerned by the extremely high level of discrimination against girls, which leads to their exclusion from the right to education, leisure, expression and participation, as is the case in particular in Afghanistan.

Children continue to face major challenges, as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the combination of political, economic and environmental crises have continued to negatively impact their rights around the world. Most children's rights have suffered significant setbacks in recent years, including in the areas of health, education, protection from violence and special protection measures.

Child displacement has reached a record high, with 44 million children forcibly displaced, many due to war and extreme weather events. Many children have been displaced for years and lack access to vaccines, health care and education.

Similarly, many migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking children, including unaccompanied and separated children, continue to face violations of their

rights, including the rights to health, education and the mere right to seek an international protection. They are facing violence, including from public authorities, push backs that put their lives in grave danger, gender-based violence, torture and ill treatment, while trying to fly from their home country and seek protection.

Dialogues with States parties have also revealed a decline in access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and sexual education, particularly for girls. In some States, both policy and practice have regressed, exposing girls to sexual exploitation and abuse and early pregnancy.

The Committee, in the context of its mandate as a remedy mechanism, under the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention establishing an individual communication procedure, concluded that the rights of a 13-year-old girl had been violated due to her lack of access to a medical termination of pregnancy, following sexual violence to which she had been subjected since the age of 9. In this regard, the Committee recalled that the right of children to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, as recognised by article 24 (para. 1) of the Convention, includes the right to exercise control over their health and body, including the freedom to make responsible choices in the area of sexual and reproductive health. He also recalled that given the high rates of teenage pregnancy worldwide and the additional risks of morbidity and mortality associated with it, States should ensure that health systems and services are available and able to respond to the specific sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescent girls, including family planning and safe abortion for all.

The empowerment of girls is also challenged by the questioning of children as rights holders under the guise of cultural, religious and patriarchal traditions, such as “family values”, a trend noted by the Committee in different regions of the world as well as in intergovernmental forums such as the Human Rights Council. The Committee adopted a statement highlighting the objective and purpose of article 5 of the Convention and especially the notion of evolving capacities of the child, which strikes a balance between the rights of the child, the rights and duties of parents, and the State’s obligation to strengthen the family so that children can exercise their rights under the Convention.

While in many countries the fight against female genital mutilation has led to the prohibition of this harmful practice, its effective elimination still faces significant challenges. In some countries, this momentum has stagnated or even regressed, which is a major source of concern.

Mental health is a major challenge for the majority of States reviewed, but the situation is more critical for developing States. Similarly, the Committee noted that the fight against tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs are areas that require greater attention from States parties in terms of policy, planning and investment.

Children are facing multiples obstacles while trying to exercise their rights to access to justice and effective remedy in regard of the rights protected by Goals 3 and 5. This means that, as it is the case for many other rights protected by the Convention, these rights are not effective and remain purely theoretical. This is why the Committee has decided to dedicate its next General comment to access to justice and effective remedies.

Regarding SDGs 17

The Committee was able to closely monitor the impact of reduced funding on the achievement of the SDGs, especially for countries facing significant economic difficulties, aggravated by the impact of climate change.

In many developing countries, access to health, education, drinking water and sanitation depends to a large extent on bilateral or multilateral cooperation.

The reduction in the investment of the international cooperation for States, Civil society organisations and other agencies helping populations in need has dramatically delayed the achievement of the SDGs in general.

The latest decision by the US government to abruptly suspend funding for many organizations and funds is already being felt by actors working for children's rights. A number of programmes are no longer able to operate or have had to significantly reduce their activities. This puts the lives and development of many children at great risk.

Similarly, monitoring progress and difficulties in implementing the SDGs may be further hampered by the UN's financial difficulties due to delays in paying contributions from States Parties, hence the state of unpredictability experienced by UN mechanisms, including treaty bodies.

2. Examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs

Addressing poverty and inequality is needed to remove barriers and progress on many SDGs targets.

Indeed, poverty and inequality remain the root causes of the difficulties children face in their daily lives. One in six children worldwide lives in extreme poverty. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, many States had made significant progress in reducing the number of children living below the international poverty line. However, the situation has deteriorated significantly due to the pandemic, and it now seems unlikely that Sustainable Development Goal 1, to end poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030, will be achieved on current trends. Poverty rates are particularly high in sub-Saharan Africa, where 40 per cent of children live in extreme poverty. The Committee also noted that even in stable and wealthier countries, the number of children living in poverty is increasing.

Food insecurity and difficulty in accessing adequate housing are increasingly noted by the Committee, a situation which no longer spares the richest States, where many children receive only one meal a day and where school canteens are not widespread or able to meet the needs of economically and socially vulnerable children.

Violence against children is of particular concern – within their own homes and in society. We note that more than 120 states issued pledges to reduce violence at the First Ministerial Conference on Violence Against Children in Bogota, Columbia in October 2024, and the Committee aims to track government’s progress on these pledges.

3. Follow-up actions and measures

The monitoring of the SDGs is carried out through the examination of periodic reports and is the subject of observations and recommendations adopted following the dialogue with the States parties.

The Committee monitored the progress made in the run-up to the Summit for the Future and proposed that children and their rights be better taken into account in the final version of the Pact for the Future and the Global Digital Compact. The issue of children’s rights must be considered in all the debates and in all the decisions that will be adopted, in particular on the climate crisis, peace and security, the Global Digital Compact and future generations.

The Committee will continue monitoring the progress made by States in their implementation of the rights of the child and the SDGs, through its review of

the States parties' periodic reports and will continue to include a reference to the SDGs in the Concluding observations and other statements.

4. Recommendations and key messages to be considered for inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025 HLPF

The global partnership for development must integrate the search for peaceful solutions to the conflicts that are shaking the world and give priority to establishing the sustainable conditions for international peace and security.

Achieving the sustainable development goals requires ending the crisis of multilateralism and renewing a partnership for development, placing human beings at the heart of the various agendas.

A new financial governance is needed to guarantee access to financing for sustainable development and leave no one behind.