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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Full-day meeting of the Human Rights Council on the rights of the child

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 45/30, in which the Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a summary report on the full-day meeting on the theme “the rights of the child and the Sustainable Development Goals”, which was held on 1 March 2021.



I. Background

1. In its resolution 7/29, the Human Rights Council affirmed its commitment to effectively integrate the rights of the child in its work and that of its mechanisms in a regular, systematic and transparent manner, taking into account the specific needs of boys and girls. It decided to dedicate, at a minimum, an annual full-day meeting to discuss different themes on the rights of the child, including the identification of challenges to the realization of those rights. In its resolution 45/30, the Council decided to focus its 2021 full-day meeting on the theme “the rights of the child and the Sustainable Development Goals”. It requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a summary report on the annual day discussion, and to present it to the Council at its forty-eighth session. The present report is submitted to the Council pursuant to that request.

2. The meeting was held online on 1 March 2021.¹ It followed up on a previous Human Rights Council full-day meeting on the protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, held on 6 March 2017, during the Council’s thirty-fourth session.² The meeting further sought to identify the implications of a child rights approach for the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, including how children being left behind within and beyond the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic could be reached.

3. The meeting comprised two panel discussions: a morning panel discussion focused on “Securing a future for today’s children and generations to come: building back better with children’s rights upfront”, chaired by the President of the Human Rights Council; and an afternoon panel discussion addressing “Gaps and barriers affecting children: following up on commitments through the decade of action and delivery for the Sustainable Development Goals”, chaired by the Vice-President of the Council.

II. Securing a future for today’s children and generations to come: building back better with children’s rights upfront

A. Opening remarks by the High Commissioner

4. In her opening remarks, the High Commissioner said that realizing the rights of the child was a prerequisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. However, discrimination, inequality, lack of political will, inadequate investment and other barriers meant that children’s rights often remained a wish rather than a reality. COVID-19 had made matters worse. Moreover, children were increasingly being exposed to physical and psychological violence and were being pushed into labour, child marriage, exploitation and trafficking. For many girls and young women, the threat loomed largest where they should be safest: in their own homes. During the past year, the number of children living in poverty had increased by 142 million. At their height, lockdowns had affected 90 per cent of students – in a world where more than a third of all schoolchildren did not have access to remote education. Disruptions in health coverage had led to increased rates of child and infant mortality, and nearly 100 million children under the age of 1 year had missed out on routine, life-saving vaccines owing to COVID-19-related measures. The task ahead required urgently assessing which children were at greatest risk and identifying and acting on the most pressing implementation gaps and barriers. Around the world, children and young people were demanding real change and, with only 10 years left for reaching the goal of transforming the world, the international community needed to move much faster.

¹ The meeting concept note, statements and contributions are available from <https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/RegularSessions/46session/Pages/Panel-discussions.aspx>.

² See www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session34/Documents/CN_children_annualday.doc.

B. Overview of statements by panellists

5. The Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said that during the COVID-19 pandemic children's rights had come under threat and that the economic impacts of a looming and lasting recession would hit children hardest, as their families struggled to recover. The digital divide was keeping millions of children from engaging in distance learning during school closures, a gap that must be closed. Through the Giga initiative, UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union were gathering partners to connect every school and community in the world to the Internet. The world had to do more to support families through and beyond this extraordinary time and, at the same time, global efforts had to be expanded to tackle climate change and protect the planet for future generations. It was important to empower children as agents of change and to create spaces and mechanisms to help children and young people shape policies and programmes, learn about their rights and contribute to realizing them.

6. A 16-year-old child human rights defender from Uganda and member of a child rights club called Fred explained that, to ensure the meaningful participation of children, Save Street Children Uganda had enabled children in street situations to make their voices heard through child rights clubs, advocacy programmes and activities to mark the International Day for Street Children. He said that 90 per cent of the children who had been involved in child rights clubs agreed that poverty, inequality and climate inaction were pushing more children onto the streets. Stigmatization, discrimination owing to HIV-positive status and AIDS and a heavy-handed response to the COVID-19 pandemic by the police had all resulted in severe, negative impacts on street children. Governments should act urgently to ensure that street children had access to quality health care, to improve their standard of living and to promote their right to education. World leaders needed to take poverty, inequality and climate action seriously.

7. In conclusion, Fred emphasized that children living on the street had no shelter and had to sleep outside, which undermined their rights and put them at risk of being arrested by the police, for example. Children continued to experience many forms of inequalities, making them feel not free to live as children. Governments should make sure that children had access to clean water, health care and education. They should support children and listen to them, especially in relation to climate change. If children's rights were not protected, the world would be like a pencil with no lead.

8. The Chief Executive Officer of SheSays and President of the Steering Committee of the Paris Peace Forum, Trisha Shetty, noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had forced everyone to pause and hit the reset button in order to try to adapt to the crisis. The current challenges needed to be addressed urgently, as the world was losing between 150 and 200 species every day and children were being treated as fair game in war zones. This could not become the new normal. In relation to the climate crisis, the pandemic and human rights, Ms. Shetty said that solutions were often at the mercy of political will and recalled that political will and politicians were renewable resources. She gave examples of how children and young people were already leading in the fight for justice, human rights and environmental sustainability, and called upon the world to be at least half as brave as they were by speaking up in solidarity.

9. In closing, Ms. Shetty expressed concern about the fact that more than 1 billion children were reportedly victims of violence and neglect. Real lives and real people were behind the statistics. While child activists might be celebrated globally, in the global South they were often villainized and threatened with silencing and restrictions to their autonomy. Ms. Shetty reiterated that public health-care services, education and infrastructure urgently required more investment and that, rather than looking to identify innovative solutions to achieve those aims, it was essential to combat complicity among political leaders.

10. The Chair of the Elders, Mary Robinson, expressed deep concern about the risks to the health and future prospects of girls who had been forced to leave school and who were, as a result, increasingly vulnerable to child pregnancy and child marriage. The Elders had engaged extensively on the issue of child marriage and had helped to build the Girls not Brides network in response. Ms. Robinson highlighted that Save the Children had warned that 2020 would be a year of irreversible setbacks and lost progress for girls, with 500,000

more girls at risk of being forced into child marriage and 1 million more estimated to have become pregnant. While the importance of sport for children's physical and mental well-being had been emphasized during the long months of COVID-19-related restrictions, the need to address abuses of children in and through sport had been neglected.

11. Ms. Robinson noted the importance of listening to children and ensuring their meaningful participation, highlighting that they were already speaking out intensely and scientifically about the risks of climate change. States should pay attention to how the COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated that market-driven systems were unfit to provide education. In relation to the vaccine rollout, while the COVAX initiative was encouraging, not enough progress had taken place. The COVID-19 pandemic had placed everyone outside of their comfort zones, and thought should now be given to building forward in order to build back, in particularly with a view to overcoming the inequalities that had been exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic.

12. The UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, Afshan Khan, highlighted three key elements of the panel discussion: leaving no child behind, empowering children as agents of change and tracking progress. Existing inequalities had been further exposed and deepened by the pandemic, and promoting and protecting the rights of children therefore required a deliberate strategy for reaching those who remained furthest behind. Schools had to be the last to close and the first to open in the context of containment measures. A key dimension of building back better was the right of all children to express their views freely and participate in matters concerning them, but that right was often neglected. Making sure that children were given the opportunity and space to speak up, teaching children about their rights and engaging with them as agents of change was a collective responsibility.

C. Plenary discussion

13. Speakers³ emphasized that the rights of the child were at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the most widely ratified human rights instrument, significant gaps in its implementation remained. Rising poverty, school closures and lockdowns had made children more vulnerable to violence and abuse, with lifelong, irreversible and transgenerational consequences. Children's overall well-being should remain a core, shared objective, particularly in light of the challenges posed by the pandemic and the related lockdowns. Vaccine nationalism could cause significant numbers of children to be left behind.

14. Several speakers highlighted that the 2030 Agenda had to be understood in relation to the rights of children and that poorer countries needed the support of the international community in that regard. A human rights-based approach that fully integrated the rights of the child had to be better implemented in practice, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures.

15. Speakers noted the importance of identifying best practices for the meaningful engagement of children in policymaking processes. Children had to be able to participate and their voices had to be taken into account by States. Despite these calls and statements about

³ Statements were made by the following States: Azerbaijan (on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries), Bahrain (on behalf of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf), Cameroon (on behalf of the Group of African States), Chad, Croatia (on behalf of a group of countries), Estonia (on behalf of Nordic and Baltic countries), Georgia, India, Libya, Luxembourg (on behalf of a group of countries), Maldives, Malta, Niger, North Macedonia, Pakistan (on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation), Poland, Qatar, Slovenia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and Viet Nam. The European Union made a statement, as did the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The following organizations also made statements: Office of the Ombudsman of Argentina, World Vision International, Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, China Family Planning Association, Chinese Association for International Understanding and China Soong Ching Ling Foundation. Oral statements are available from <https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/RegularSessions/46session/Pages/Statements.aspx?SessionId=41&MeetingDate=01/03/2021%2000%3a00%3a00>.

children's role and importance in society, however, children felt overlooked. Nothing about children should be decided without them.

16. Speakers noted with concern the growing role of private actors in the provision of social services and that this had had a devastating impact on the human rights of children, as privatization and commercialization had resulted in restrictions to access and the exacerbation of inequalities. The pandemic had shown that privatized institutions were unfit to fulfil their role, particularly in the education sector. Schools often provided more than just an education but also access to water and sanitation, nutrition, care and safety, which many children, particularly in conflict zones or in situations of extreme hardship, could not otherwise access. Speakers noted the importance of protecting children in digital spaces, improving digital literacy and counteracting cyberbullying.

III. Gaps and barriers affecting children: following up on commitments through the decade of action and delivery for the Sustainable Development Goals

A. Overview of statements by panellists

17. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Najat Maalla M'jid, noted that the risks, drivers of violence and protective factors for children cut across the whole of the 2030 Agenda. Even before the pandemic had struck, progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals had been uneven. In fact, the world had not been on track to achieve the Goals and ending violence against children. COVID-19 now threatened to reverse even the limited gains that had been made up to that point. The World Health Organization had found that, while laws to curb violence against children had been widely enacted, they were often inadequately enforced. For example, only one fifth of countries had reported that their national action plans were fully funded and included measurable targets and indicators. The Special Representative said that allocating budgets and strengthening services for the well-being and development of children and for their protection from all forms of violence, as well as inclusive social protection reaching the most vulnerable and leaving no one behind, were key to recovering from the pandemic.

18. In her concluding remarks, the Special Representative welcomed the participation of all the children and young people in the discussion. It was important to involve children more systematically in decision-making processes and to support children's own initiatives and ideas. The pandemic had increased the vulnerability of children worldwide and the world needed to make sure that a child rights-based approach and a gender-sensitive approach were applied to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, in order to avoid setbacks. Ms. M'jid said that budget allocated for children could not be considered as an expense but, rather, as an investment, and that it was necessary scale up investment in economic growth and human capital on the basis of reliable data.

19. A member of the Network of Child and Adolescent Correspondents in the Americas and the Caribbean of the Inter-American Children's Institute, Claudia, said that the main challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals were: addressing inequality and corruption; guaranteeing access to basic services; and improving the global economic system, thereby improving education, health and equality. It was crucial to ensure a quality education for all children and, at the same time, to make every effort to reach those who could not access education. To improve the situation, children should be involved, through consultations, in all plans and documents that would define their future. Claudia recommended getting to know the boys, girls and adolescents of the world and putting important issues such as the environment, education and the well-being of children and adolescents at the top of the agenda. Those present should commit themselves to getting to know children's experiences first-hand and to realizing that commitment.

20. In closing, Claudia said children dreamed of a world that was worthy of their dreams, in which they could live a full and happy childhood. Education must not be sacrificed. Girls were girls, not mothers, and deserved to study. Claudia began her activism when she was 11

years old because her best friend had been insulted at school. She had asked for permission to speak about the issue with other children and, after that small act, she saw that children had many problems within and beyond the school environment. She was proud to be from Ecuador because she had had the chance to discover wonderful people despite the problems in the country. In closing, Claudia said that all children had dreams and admired adults. It was time to include children in policymaking, as children too had feelings and were ready to fight for the benefit of society. Delegates should learn from children because they want to make their contribution.

21. A member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Benyam Dawit Mezmur, emphasized that the link between the Sustainable Development Goals, international human rights law and children's rights was clearer than it had been in the context of the Millennium Development Goals. Increasing the reporting burden of countries should be avoided by relying instead upon existing mechanisms, particularly human rights mechanisms, and States had to ensure the meaningful participation of children in policies. It was critical for States to understand that the Sustainable Development Goals were not only relevant for the achievement of economic, social and cultural rights, but also of civil and political rights. Unfortunately, many measurements of child poverty focused on those rights of the child that were easily quantified, to the detriment of those that were difficult or impossible to qualify and quantify. Enhanced investment in children must be at the centre of accelerating action to achieve the Goals.

22. In conclusion, Mr. Mezmur noted that good practices in relation to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals often revolved around children's participation and engagement. He drew attention to a number of good practices by Albania, Azerbaijan, Costa Rica, Germany, Ireland and Serbia, among other States, that focused on improving children's participation in and awareness of the Goals, noting that those examples came from States rather than from the Human Rights Council or other international mechanisms and calling for enhanced cooperation to build upon such good practices. Mr. Mezmur noted with concern that child human rights defenders were largely ignored and marginalized by States and drew attention to their need for protection and to their right to have their voices heard. He emphasized that there should be a sense of urgency in scaling up efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in accordance with the rights of the child.

23. The Children and Young People's Commissioner of Scotland, Bruce Adamson, said that it was fortunate that the international human rights framework had provided the tools to ensure that children were not overlooked or left behind in global development efforts. After decades of campaigning by children, civil society and his office, the Scottish Parliament would soon be fully and directly incorporating the Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic Scottish law. Incorporating the Convention into national law and the Sustainable Development Goals into the national performance framework held great potential for strengthening the protection of children's rights in Scotland. Mr. Adamson noted the leadership shown by child human rights defenders on climate change and against misogyny and racism around the world. Their leadership would be an important part of delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. He highlighted how impact assessments needed to be implemented in order to ensure legitimate, systemic decision-making, to ensure that children's rights were not overlooked and to build a sustainable, rights-respecting world for everyone.

24. Mr. Adamson commended the fact that many children had made statements at the meeting and that children had also led delegations from civil society and States. This exemplified the leadership that the High Commissioner had called for during the morning panel. More had to be done to include children, who could play a powerful role at both the national and international levels. Unfortunately, children did not have adequate access to support and social protection schemes; implementing a rights-based approach was crucial to addressing that issue. Regarding State accountability, Mr. Adamson emphasized that human rights standards should be integrated further into domestic laws, setting long-term strategies informed by young people and their views.

B. Plenary discussion

25. During the plenary discussion, speakers⁴ said the COVID-19 crisis offered an opportunity to transform and improve how early childhood services were provided. For example, smaller groups and better student-teacher ratios at schools could help to improve the engagement of and the attention paid to children, enhancing the quality of early childhood education. Unfortunately, in 2020 1.6 billion children had been deprived of an education because of the COVID-19-related widespread closure of schools, thus hindering the effective implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4. Furthermore, social distancing measures had had a negative impact on children, specifically because they were deprived of essential opportunities to acquire social skills through natural human interaction. States were called upon to integrate sexuality education into their national curricula in order to give all children and adolescents scientifically accurate, rights-based information and the skills to build healthy and informed futures.

26. In relation to the climate crisis, speakers noted with concern that children's right to survival was being threatened by the increase in the number and severity of climate-related disasters and that for many the right to an adequate standard of living was at risk owing to rising sea levels and extreme weather events. It was important to involve children in addressing the increase in violence in their communities in the context of the pandemic.

27. Targeted measures to reach children in the most vulnerable situations were urgently needed and, if the Sustainable Development Goals were to be achieved, the principle of protecting the rights of the child should be elevated to one of absolute importance. In order to address inequalities, the world needed robust monitoring and data-collection systems capable of identifying which children were being excluded, particularly as a result of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

28. Speakers recommended that States firmly ground their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in international child rights laws and standards. To that end, they recommended promoting a holistic approach to the 2030 Agenda in which no child was left behind, ensuring an enabling civic space for children, accelerating progress and scaled up investment in education and social protection schemes for children and supporting the formal recognition of the right to a safe, clean and healthy environment.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

29. **In the framework of the decade of action and delivery for the Sustainable Development Goals, global, local and individual action is needed to urgently find solutions. Children are demanding real change and for people and the planet to come first. They have demonstrated that they can play a leading role and contribute to defining a better future. With fewer than 10 years left until the deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, it is urgent to follow up on the commitments made to children contained therein.**

30. **The rights of the child are at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals, which were designed as an integrated framework and reflect the spectrum of children's rights. All children have the right to survive, to develop to the maximum extent possible and to a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and**

⁴ Statements were made by the following States: Bahrain, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Barbados (on behalf of the Caribbean Community), Canada (on behalf of States members of the International Organization of the Francophonie), Fiji, Gabon, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Latvia (on behalf of Nordic and Baltic countries), Marshall Islands, Montenegro, Nepal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Sudan, Timor-Leste and Ukraine. The European Union made a statement, as did the United Nations Population Fund. The following organizations also made statements: Edmund Rice International, Child Rights Connect, Consortium for Street Children, Save the Children International, Plan International, Inc. and International Planned Parenthood Federation. Oral statements are available from <https://hrcmeetings.ohchr.org/HRCSessions/RegularSessions/46session/Pages/Statements.aspx?SessionId=41&MeetingDate=01/03/2021%2000%3a00%3a00>.

social development. All children have the right to live their lives free from deprivation, violence and abuse. Making children's rights a reality and responding to their needs is the best way to achieve holistic, transformative and sustainable development and to prevent cycles of inequality and deprivation from repeating across generations.

31. The COVID-19 pandemic is reversing decades of development gains, however, and has exposed long-term failings to protect and uphold children's rights, jeopardizing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Beyond being a health crisis, the pandemic has proved to be an economic, social and human rights crisis with devastating consequences that are disproportionately affecting children everywhere and threatening their rights. It has unmasked the shortcomings of the world's economic and governance models, revealing deep social, political and economic inequalities, environmental degradation and discrimination, which manifest themselves as poverty, hunger, violence and unfair access to rights and essential services for children. Moreover, the pandemic has drawn attention to the increased role of private actors in the provision of essential services such as health care and education. Children's rights have been adversely affected where privatization has caused restricted access based on families' ability to pay for services, exacerbating inequalities.

32. As a result, although the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights instrument, unacceptably large gaps in its implementation remain. Moreover, lockdowns and containment measures, school closures in particular, have placed children at risk of heightened levels of violence and abuse, with lifelong, irreversible and transgenerational consequences.

33. As the world begins the enormous task of building back from the pandemic, there is an unprecedented opportunity to reset and rebuild from the foundations, to transform our societies and economies, making them sustainable, fair and inclusive, respecting the dignity and rights of all children everywhere and of future generations. Such an effort requires a decisive response at all levels to the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights by redefining and reinforcing the global commons of the climate and environment, public health, education and the digital environment. International solidarity and multilateralism have never been more essential to overcoming the pursuit of narrow interests at all levels, which threaten children's rights and the overall achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

34. Implementing the 2030 Agenda in the limited time left requires urgently reaching the children who are being left behind by taking decisions and actions guided by the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols – in particular, the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child and children's rights to life, survival and development, and to participate.

35. To this end, the following core recommendations were made at the annual full-day meeting of the Human Rights Council on the rights of the child:

(a) Children's rights and best interests should be upheld in all decisions, investments and actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and build back from the pandemic. Specifically:

(i) The maximum available resources should be invested in children's health, education, protection from violence and social protection, as doing so is crucial for upholding children's rights. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and at the request of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, States must ensure that their responses to the pandemic, including in terms of the allocation of resources, are in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child. The fiscal space needs to be expanded and investment needs to be massively scaled up in favour of children's rights and needs, taking a child rights perspective to budgeting processes. Budgets should be transparent and open to public participation, including children's participation, in line with the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2016);

- (ii) Public goods and services should be redesigned so as to promote and protect children's rights and best interests, in particular by scaling them up and ensuring equal access for all to essential services, including health care, mental health support and services, social protection and child protection services, especially given the increased need. Rising poverty, school closures and lockdowns have made children more vulnerable to violence and abuse, with lifelong, transgenerational consequences. Services must target the most marginalized children and families in situations of vulnerability, to help prevent violence against children, child labour, child marriage, exploitation and trafficking, and must be made more resilient to prevent interruptions in future crises;
- (iii) Efforts should be scaled up and partnerships should be established to close the digital divide and increase accessibility to and the affordability of the Internet and technology for all children, especially those most marginalized and those in vulnerable situations. At the same time, it is crucial to ensure a stronger framework for the protection of children in the digital environment, to improve digital literacy and to effectively counteract online abuse and exploitation and cyberbullying;
- (b) Children's situations and their rights should be monitored to understand the impacts upon them and design appropriate responses. Specifically:
- (i) States should strengthen the collection and availability of reliable data disaggregated by age, sex, disability, migration status and other factors to enable the assessment of disparities. All children, including those in vulnerable or precarious situations, should have access to birth registration and legal identity and should be included in national data collection and monitoring exercises;
- (ii) Data from existing human rights frameworks and reporting mechanisms, including data of the Committee on the Rights of the Child's concluding observations, and from civil society consultations, including with children, should be used to help identify gaps and priorities for children. Child rights impact assessments should serve as a key tool to design response and recovery plans in a way that prioritizes children's rights and their best interests. Data collection and monitoring exercises should be carried out in accordance with child rights principles, involving children, ensuring transparency and the right to information while also respecting their right to privacy;
- (c) Children should be empowered and listen to, as well as be allowed and enabled to participate in building back. Specifically:
- (i) Nothing about children should be decided without them. The pandemic has underscored the need to empower and listen to children by involving them directly and treating them as part of the solution to the multiple crises affecting them, including the pandemic and the climate crisis. Children have the right to participate meaningfully in all decisions and processes affecting them; yet, they face major barriers to the enjoyment of their civil and political rights, and their right to participate is routinely neglected. Efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to build back from the pandemic must integrate the right of all children to express their views freely and participate in matters concerning them. It is a collective responsibility to make sure that children are given the opportunity and space to speak up, are taught about their rights and are engaged as agents of change;
- (ii) States must protect and fulfil children's civil and political rights and take proactive measures to support and enable their participation in decision-making at all levels. Children should be provided with safe, age-appropriate information and spaces to participate both online and offline in global and national decision-making and actions. States should further support existing platforms for children's meaningful and safe participation by consulting with children through children's parliaments, children's councils and other child-led groups at the national and subnational levels.