

Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child

Theme: The rights of the child and the Sustainable Development Goals

Concept note (draft as of 8 February 2021)

Date and venue: 1 March 2021, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 4 to 6 p.m.
(broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)

Objectives: The event will be an opportunity to follow up on the Human Rights Council [full-day meeting on the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) held at its 34th session. It will identify the implications of a child rights approach for the Decade of Action to accelerate delivery on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including how children being left behind within and beyond the context of the COVID-19 pandemic can urgently be reached. This will be done by:

- Assessing the gaps and barriers to realizing the rights of the child and Sustainable Development Goals, with a special focus on the children being left behind, as well as integrating a gender perspective.
- Clarifying the pathways through which progress for children's rights supports SDG acceleration, and how a child rights approach to the Decade of Action can strengthen strategies to reach SDGs by the 2030 deadline.
- Creating a space for inter-generational dialogue, by enabling speakers from all generations, including children themselves, to define pathways to realizing the rights of children now and in the future through transformative, empowering and sustainable solutions.
- Calling for greater commitment to incorporate a child rights-based approach to the SDGs, the pledge to leave no one behind and recovery strategies from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Analyzing how the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights can be instrumentalized for the benefit of children, ensuring that their rights and best interests are the priority in building back better, and that their views are heard and taken into account.

Morning 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.	Securing a future for today's children and generations to come: building back better with children's rights upfront
Chair:	H.E. Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan , President of the Human Rights Council
Opening statements:	Ms. Michelle Bachelet , United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (<i>video message</i>) Ms. Greta Thunberg , Climate and environmental activist (TBC)
Panellists and themes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) <i>A child rights approach to SDG implementation and building back better</i>• Child representative, Participant in consultation and dialogues with OHCHR (TBD) <i>Children's rights and views upfront: transformative, empowering and sustainable solutions</i>• Representative, Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals (TBD) <i>How children and youth can engage together in claiming the rights of present and future generations</i>• Ms. Mary Robinson, Chair of The Elders (TBC)

- *Galvanizing global commitments and actions on the ground to deliver on children's rights and the pledge to leave no one behind*

Afternoon 4 to 6 p.m.	The gaps and barriers affecting children: following up on commitments through the Decade of Action and delivery on the Sustainable Development Goals
Chair:	H.E. Ms. Monique T.G. Van Daalen , Vice-President of the Human Rights Council
Panellists and themes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (<i>video message</i>) <i>Scaling up efforts to safeguard children's freedom from violence and advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i> • Child Representative, Participant in consultation and dialogues with OHCHR (TBD) <i>Gaps and barriers raised by children in consultation with the UN Human Rights Office on realizing children's rights through the SDGs</i> • Mr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Committee on the Rights of the Child (<i>video message</i>) <i>Assessment of the global status of the rights of the child and SDG achievement based on the Committee's monitoring process</i> • Representative, National Human Rights Institution (TBD) <i>Building back and accelerating SDG implementation through a child rights-based approach: lessons from country experience</i>
Outcome:	<p>The main aim of the annual full-day meeting is to highlight how to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in a manner consistent with the rights of the child. The discussion is an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of HRC resolution 34/16 on this topic, by analysing both challenges and opportunities going forward. Through the exchange of expertise and experiences the discussion will result in recommendations on how a child rights perspective to the Decade of Action can strengthen strategies to reach the SDGs by the 2030 deadline. It will also result in recommendations on children being left behind within and beyond the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and provide strategies by which they can urgently be reached, following up on the commitments made under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the SDGs. The meeting outcomes will be captured in a summary report of the High Commissioner, which will be conveyed as an input to related processes of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly of the United Nations.</p>
Mandate:	<p>In its resolution 7/29 on the rights of the child adopted in March 2008, 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 specific needs of boys and girls" and "to incorporate into its programme of work sufficient time, at a minimum an annual full-day meeting, to discuss different specific themes on the rights of the child." Pursuant to its resolution 45/30, the Human Rights Council will focus its annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child on the theme "the rights of the child and the Sustainable Development Goals".</p>
Format:	<p>The duration of the annual full-day meeting will be limited to two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. For both segments, the opening statement and initial presentations by the panellists will be followed by an interactive discussion divided into two segments.</p> <p>A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including the opening statement, panellists' presentations, their responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for two segments of interventions from</p>

the floor for States and observers (2x12), national human rights institutions (2x1) and non-governmental organizations (2x2).

The list of speakers for both discussions will be established through the online registration system and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups of States will be moved to the beginning of the list. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. Delegates who have not been able to take the floor due to time constraints will be able to upload their statements on the online system to be posted on the HRC Extranet.

Accessibility for persons with disabilities:

In an effort to render the Human Rights Council more accessible to persons with disabilities and to promote their full participation in the work of the Council on an equal basis with others, both meetings will be made accessible to persons with disabilities. International sign interpretation and real-time captioning in English will be provided and webcasted. Participants can access live English captioning on the website <https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=CFI-UNOG> during the event itself. The accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities is available for further information on the HRC website (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Accessibility.aspx>).

Background:

Six years ago the world committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a promise to make it a more just and sustainable place, in which all children are protected, healthy, educated and free to have a future. At the core of the Sustainable Development Goals lies the crucial promise to leave no child behind, reaffirming States' obligation to respect and uphold the rights of all children everywhere. Mirroring the spectrum of children's rights, the 2030 Agenda demonstrates that realizing their rights is a necessity to achieving sustainable development. Yet to date the steps taken towards reaching the SDGs have been slow and in many contexts children's rights remain far from a reality because of lacking political will and investment, amongst other barriers.

While there has been dramatic overall progress in child survival, nutrition and education in recent decades, it has been uneven, with many children continuing to be left behind. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic we risk seeing a wholesale reversal of the gains made to date, placing the world far off-track from realizing the obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and from achieving the corresponding SDGs. The fallout of the pandemic and measures to contain it have deeply affected children at all levels and those who are the most marginalized and discriminated against have been affected the worst: children with disabilities, from the poorest households, girls, migrants and displaced children, and those living in conflict-affected settings, to name a few.

Beyond a health crisis, the pandemic is proving to be as much an economic, social, and human rights crisis. Its impacts have had devastating consequences, placing children's rights under threat in all countries. Children are increasingly being exposed to or experiencing physical and psychological violence, pushed into labour, child marriage, exploitation and trafficking. For many girls and young women, the threat looms largest where they should be safest: in their own homes. Untold numbers of children are going hungry, experiencing or at risk of homelessness, facing gaps in their education, or missing out because of lacking access to the tools and connectivity required to participate in online learning. Others are engaging in more screen time than ever before, facing heightened exposure to inappropriate content and online predators. As the world around us is overturned by overlapping crises, discrimination, violence, inequality and a climate of fear augment, while environmental pollution spreads and unchecked climate change continues to unfold.

The global situation poses an immediate threat to all of children's rights, including their rights to survival and development. Children suffer all of the impacts disproportionately, often with severe lifelong consequences due to their sensitive phase of physical and

psychological development. In this context, achieving the SDGs by 2030 has begun to seem all but out of reach.

Every child has the right to develop to the maximum extent possible and to a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Building back from the pandemic and accelerating progress toward the SDGs will depend on prioritizing children, ensuring that their rights and best interests are a primary consideration, and listening to their voices. Protecting, investing in and empowering children is the most guaranteed way to accelerate global development and secure a future for the present and next generations, as the benefits multiply throughout their lifetime, extending to that of their children and the whole of society. By ensuring that the children at greatest risk of violence, poverty and exclusion are protected, healthy, educated and empowered, intergenerational cycles of suffering and want can be overcome.

With less than ten years left until the deadline for reaching the SDGs, it is time to take stock of progress and follow up on the commitments made. The task ahead requires an urgent assessment of which children are at greatest risk and identifying the most pressing SDG implementation gaps and barriers affecting the rights of children, especially for those being left behind the furthest. The Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs calls for accelerated solutions involving global, local and people's action. Children themselves are demanding real change in which people and the planet finally come first, and have demonstrated that they can play a leading role and make a vital contribution to defining a better future. Now is the time to listen to their voices.

Background documents:

- [Human Rights Council resolution 34/16](#) of 24 March 2017 entitled "Rights of the child: protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"
- Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2017) ([A/HRC/34/27](#))
- OHCHR 2020 report to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: *Child rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic*
- [Secretary-General of the United Nations, The highest aspiration: a call to action for human rights \(2020\)](#)
- [Human Rights Council resolution 45/30](#) of 13 October 2020 entitled "Rights of the child: realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment"
- Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment (2020) ([A/HRC/43/30](#))