



ngo group for the crc

DAYS OF GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Information for NGOs

WHAT ARE DAYS OF GENERAL DISCUSSION?

- Although not mentioned in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Rule 75 of the rules of procedure (CRC/C/4/Rev.1) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child allows one or more meetings per year for a general discussion on one specific article of the Convention or related subject.
- The purpose of a day of general discussion is to foster a deeper understanding of the contents and implications of the Convention as they relate to specific articles or topics.

HOW OFTEN AND WHERE DO THEY TAKE PLACE?

- The Committee traditionally holds its day of general discussion once a year in September.
- It is a one day meeting which takes place from 10:00–18:00.
- The exact date of the meeting is fixed one year in advance.
- The meeting is hosted at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais Wilson (52 rue de Pâquis) in Geneva, Switzerland.

HOW IS THE DAY STRUCTURED?

- The day of general discussion focuses on a topic selected by the Committee and announced a year in advance of the event.
- All parties interested in contributing to the discussion may submit written information to the Commit-

tee which will inform the deliberations on the day of discussion.

- In addition to written submissions, interested parties may participate in the day of general discussion.
- The discussion day generally begins with a one-hour plenary session which includes a welcome from the Chair of the Committee, an introductory statement by a Committee member and additional introductions to the theme from various UN agencies and NGOs.
- The meeting then splits into two working groups which meet for approximately three hours (one and a half hours in the morning and one and a half hours in the afternoon).
- A closing plenary session includes a report back from the two working group meetings and general conclusions from a Committee member.
- There is a two-hour lunch break (1:00–3:00) during which side events, such as exhibitions, films or discussions on a related theme, might take place.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE AND IN WHAT WAYS?

- Representatives from governments, other human rights treaty bodies, UN agencies, NGOs, national human rights institutions as well as individual children and experts can participate in the meeting.
- The Committee also welcomes written contributions from interested organizations or individuals.
- Previously published materials may be submitted to the Committee but will not be distributed to participants unless made available in sufficient quantities.

■ Contributions should give examples that demonstrate or illustrate implementation of relevant articles of the Convention, share information on best practices, assess efforts being made, identify gaps and make recommendations for action to be taken by States Parties.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE THEMES OF PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS?

The Committee has held seventeen days of general discussion:

- Children in armed conflicts (1992)
- Economic exploitation of children (1993)
- The role of the family in the promotion of the rights of the child (1994)
- The girl child (1995)
- Administration of juvenile justice (1995)
- The child and the media (1996)
- The rights of children with disabilities (1997)
- Children living in a world with AIDS (1998)
- Tenth anniversary of the CRC commemorative meeting: achievements and challenges (1999)
- State violence against children (2000)
- Violence against children, within the family and in schools (2001)
- The private sector as a service provider (2002)
- The rights of indigenous children (2003)
- Implementing child rights in early childhood (2004)
- Children without parental care (2005)
- The right of the child to be heard (2006)
- Resources for the rights of the child – responsibility of states (2007)

The next day of general discussion will focus on the right of the child to education in emergency situations (2008).

HOW ARE THE THEMES CHOSEN?

- Committee members decide each year on the theme to be discussed.
- Ideas for possible themes come from Committee members, UN agencies and NGOs.
- This decision is made in a private meeting.

HOW CAN I SUGGEST A THEME?

- The Committee is open to receiving suggestions as to possible themes for discussion.

■ Suggestions should be submitted in writing to the Committee more than one year in advance, ideally during the months of July or August.

■ Proposals should set out the relevance of the theme to the Convention and should highlight which articles of the Convention would be referred to in the discussion.

■ Topics for two working groups should be proposed and developed in order to show how they relate to the main topic under discussion.

HOW DO I REGISTER FOR THE MEETING?

- The number of participants is limited.
- To attend the meeting, a registration form must be completed and submitted to the Secretariat of the Committee prior to the deadline (generally mid-July).
- Registration forms are available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/discussion.htm>
- Completed forms should be submitted to CRCgeneraldiscussion@ohchr.org
- Priority is generally given on a first come, first served basis. Other criteria such as the number of people from the same organization, regional distribution or youth participation may also be taken into account.
- Confirmation of registration will be provided by the Secretariat of the Committee.
- There is no registration fee but no funding is available for travel expenses.
- Only those who have registered for the meeting will be allowed to attend.

HOW DO I PREPARE A WRITTEN SUBMISSION?

- Contributions must be submitted in one of the three working languages of the Committee (English, French and Spanish).
- Submissions will not be translated by the United Nations and those written in French or Spanish should be summarized into English whenever possible.
- Documents should be no more than seven pages long.
- Submissions should include a maximum of five recommendations which could be adopted by the Committee following the day of discussion. The recommendations, which should be attached as an annex, must be directly relevant to the themes for the discussion day and be listed in order of priority.
- The deadline for written contributions is the end of June.
- Contributions should be sent electronically to CRCgeneraldiscussion@ohchr.org

■ Submissions are circulated to all registered participants and posted on the website of the Child Rights Information Network (www.crin.org).

CAN I MAKE A PRESENTATION DURING THE MEETING?

- The Committee requests that participants avoid making formal statements.
- Oral contributions should be limited to interventions in the debate.
- Time is extremely limited and presentations should be concise and precise. They should be directly related to the topics under discussion.
- This is not the appropriate time or place to explain what an organization does or how it works. This information can be placed on tables set out for this purpose in the conference room.
- Participants may only have the opportunity to make one or two short interventions during the working group meetings due to the large number of participants present.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE MEETING?

- You may wish to bring copies of your written contribution with you to share with other participants.
- Read the contributions submitted by others in advance of the meeting.
- Decide which working group is most relevant to your work and prepare some notes as to where you might be able to contribute to the discussions. Remember that formal statements are frowned upon but good preparation can lead to relevant observations.
- The meeting is a good opportunity to meet others who are interested in similar topics. Plan some additional time before the meeting to meet with individuals who may be coming to Geneva or who are based in Geneva. As the meeting is held on a Friday, most participants do not stay on over the weekend.

CAN CHILDREN CONTRIBUTE TO THE DISCUSSIONS?

- Written and oral contributions which take into account the views, opinions and experiences of children are welcomed by the Committee.
- Children have also been asked to speak at the opening or closing ceremonies and have been rapporteurs for working groups.
- The Chairs of the working groups try to ensure that children have the opportunity to speak during the working groups, although no other special treatment is provided.

■ Preparatory meetings have been organized on occasion prior to the days of general discussion to support higher visibility of children and their issues at the days of general discussion.

WHAT IS THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING?

- The Committee adopts a series of recommendations for States Parties.
- The recommendations are available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/discussion.htm>
- Recommendations may call for studies to be done by the UN General Assembly (Study on Children in Armed Conflict; Study on Violence against Children).
- Recommendations may make proposals for the drafting of new international instruments (Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict; International Standards for the Protection and Alternative Care of Children without Parental Care).
- Written and oral input from the discussions has also contributed to the subsequent drafting of general comments on similar topics (HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child; implementing child rights in early childhood; the rights of children with disabilities).

HOW CAN THE RECOMMENDATIONS BE USED IN MY WORK?

- Although the Committee can only make recommendations to States Parties, the recommendations may assist all stakeholders in better understanding the provisions of the Convention.
- The recommendations should be brought to the attention of relevant government officials, NGOs and children working on the areas that were discussed.
- Suggestions should be made by all those concerned as to how the recommendations of the Committee can be followed-up and implemented at the national level in order to improve the situation of children.
- Best practices should be examined to see if and how they could be adapted for implementation at the national level.

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