

UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

2016 Day of General Discussion

“Children’s Rights and the Environment”

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS ON REGISTRATION AND SUBMISSIONS

On 23 September 2016, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child will hold a day of general discussion in Geneva on **“Children’s Rights and the Environment”**. The discussion day is a public meeting at which representatives of governments, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, civil society and other relevant organizations, as well as individual experts and children, are welcome.

Registration

For organizational purposes, all participants are asked to fill out a registration form, which can be downloaded from the OHCHR website:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/Discussion2016.aspx>

The **deadline for registration** with the Secretariat by e-mail (crc-dgd@ohchr.org) or fax (+41 22 917-9008) is 1 September 2016.

Due to limited space (max. 250 participants), please note that organizations are strongly encouraged to limit participation in this event to a maximum of three representatives. Please do not make any travel arrangements until you have received the final confirmation from the Secretariat of the Committee.

As this is a public meeting of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, there is neither a registration fee, nor does the Committee send out individual invitations. **The United Nations is not able to provide assistance with visa, travel or accommodation arrangements.** Participants are responsible for all expenses and arrangements related to their participation in the discussion day.

Logistics

The discussion day will take place on Friday 23 September 2016 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm at the Palais des Nations, Room XIX, in Geneva. Participants, whose registration has been confirmed, are requested to bring their passport with them to the DGD in order to obtain a security badge to enter the Palais des Nations.

To ensure that they are able to clear security on time for the start of the DGD, **participants are advised to arrive at the security section at the Pregny Gate of the Palais des Nations (see map on the website) at least one hour before the DGD begins.**

For any additional information, please contact the Secretariat, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNOG-OHCHR: E-mail: crc-dgd@ohchr.org or Fax: (+41 22) 917-9008.

Participation and oral statements

Discussions on the Day will focus on promoting understanding of the relationship between children's rights and the environment and identifying what needs to be done for child rights-related laws, policies and practices to take adequate account of environmental issues and for environment-related laws, policies and practices to be child-sensitive.

In order to facilitate the exchange of views, participants will be divided into two working groups to conduct discussions in the following categories:

Working Group 1 – Children's exposure to environmental toxicants

Hazardous substances from human activity, including industrial emissions and accidents, mining, the use of pesticides in agriculture, energy production, waste disposal etc., are found in the food children eat, the water they drink and the air they breathe, as well as the consumer products they use. They are found in homes, at schools, in play areas and places where children work. Even before they are born, children have hundreds of toxic environmental chemicals in their bodies. This working group will examine the role of children's rights in addressing the impact of environmental exposure.

Working Group 2 – Children and the effects of environmental degradation

Humans are part of the natural environment. Environmental degradation that affects land, water, plants, animals and the weather, including in urban environments, therefore ultimately also impacts the health and livelihoods of local communities in which children grow up, and their ways of living. Examples of this are the burning of fossil fuels that causes climate change, pollution that degrades the quality of soils, large-scale projects like dams or deforestation that damage ecosystems and their services, and the resultant loss of biodiversity and aggravation of existing inequalities in the use of and access to productive land and freshwater. This working group will examine the role of children's rights in addressing the diverse effects of environmental degradation. The morning session will focus on climate change and the afternoon session will focus on the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources, the destruction of ecosystems, and loss of biodiversity.

The Committee asks participants to avoid presenting formal statements during the discussion day. Hard copies of written statements to the Committee may be distributed by participants during the discussion day.

Submission of written contributions (Optional)

Within the thematic area of focus (see Working Group 1 and Working Group 2), the Committee encourages the submission of written contributions on issues related to:

The impact of environmental harm on children's rights

- What are the specific ways that environmental harm interferes with children's lives? How does this affect the exercise of their rights, including the right to health, life, survival and development, food, water and sanitation, rest, play, leisure, recreation and participation in cultural life, education, freedom from economic exploitation and violence, an adequate standards of living etc.? Please provide case studies/examples (e.g. relevant court cases).
- What is the specific impact of business activity on the environment and children's rights? Please provide case studies or examples.
- What are the factors and conditions that determine the special vulnerability of children in the context of environmental protection and harm?
- What are the links between environmental risk factors and other adverse social, cultural, and economic conditions faced by children? Please provide case studies/examples.
- What are the specific threats and discrimination faced by certain groups of children (e.g. indigenous children, girls, children with disabilities) in relation to the environment? Are there data gaps in this respect? Please provide case studies/examples.

And as a more cross-cutting issue:

- What are neglected, underexplored or emerging environmental risks in relation to children's rights? Are there priority concerns?

The role of children as agents of change in the environmental context

- How do children of different ages, gender and social backgrounds use their capacities, competencies and experiences to respond to environmental issues, and how can these skills be used in actions to protect the environment? Please provide examples (e.g. reports, films, studies, drawings, photographs or any other media of the child's choice).
- How and to what extent can children find out basic facts about environmental issues that affect them in their communities and beyond (e.g. waste, pollution, water and sanitation), participate meaningfully in environmental decision-making, and seek justice when environmental harm has been caused? What obstacles hinder them from exercising these rights (e.g. lack of child-friendly information or the burden of proof) and what are examples of good practices (e.g. regarding involvement of children in decision-making on urban planning)?

- What is the role of education in securing the environmental conditions for the enjoyment of Convention rights, both now and in the future? How can “[t]he development of respect for the natural environment” as an aim of education enshrined in Article 29 1(e) of the CRC contribute to this end? What does it mean to make understanding and knowledge of environmental issues a human right and entitlement for every child (e.g. regarding the role of children as critical agents of change)? Please provide examples/case studies of when a policy has succeeded and why to develop children’s understanding and respect for the environment as an entitlement (e.g. school curriculums on education for sustainable development) or failed and why.

State obligations regarding the rights of the child in relation to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment

- What role do States play (or could play) in addressing environmental harm (e.g. air pollution) that interferes with the enjoyment of children’s rights?
- How and to what extent do current government policies related to children’s rights (e.g. child rights action plans) take account of environmental harm? Please provide examples of good practices.
- How and to what extent do children’s rights inform laws, policies, standards, institutions, budgetary measures, projects or other actions that aim to assess, monitor, prevent, mitigate, remedy and repair environmental harm? Please provide examples of when a policy or measure has succeeded and why, or failed and why (why does the problem persist?).
- What is the precise content of State obligations arising from children’s rights, including Art. 24 2(c) (health) and Art. 29 1(e) (education) of the CRC, in relation to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment?
- What are the implications of the best interests principle enshrined in Art.3 (1) of the CRC for environmental decision-making (e.g. for the required degree of environmental protection or setting environmental policy priorities)?
- What are the State obligations relevant to ensuring children access to adequate environmental information, opportunities for participation in environmental affairs, and access to effective remedies and reparation?
- Are there heightened obligations related to the protection of children in vulnerable situations (e.g. preventive measures, specific procedures)?
- What is the precise content of State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on the environment and children’s rights (e.g. to establish a child-sensitive regulatory framework and monitor its implementation)?

- What are the State obligations relevant to protecting children from environmental harm in the long-term (e.g. health effects that may not be manifest for years after exposure or slow-onset environmental hazards)?
- What are the State obligations regarding environmental damage that transcends boundaries (e.g. destruction of river ecosystems) and thus affect children in multiple countries?
- What are concrete actions, strategies and possible methods to ensure implementation of child rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a healthy, safe, clean, and sustainable environment (e.g. mainstreaming a child rights perspective in environmental policies, awareness-raising, capacity-building, and collection of disaggregated data)?

The role of the business sector

- What role does the business sector play (or could play) in addressing environmental harm (e.g. depletion of or inequitable access to natural resources) that interferes with the enjoyment of children's rights?
- How and to what extent do children's rights inform corporate policies and measures aimed at identifying and managing environmental impacts? Please provide case studies/examples of when a policy or measure has succeeded and why, or failed and why (e.g. related to the integration of children's rights into environmental policies; assessments to identify, monitor, prevent, mitigate and account for how impacts on children's rights are addressed; engagement of children as stakeholders; and access to remedies and compensation for children).
- What does the corporate responsibility to respect children's rights (exercise due diligence) require from business when applied to the identification and management of adverse environmental impacts?

Written contributions can be submitted in English, French and Spanish, the three working languages of the Committee.

Authors of written contributions are encouraged to present a maximum of five recommendations (no more than 5 lines altogether) for actions the Committee can take in relation to the themes under discussion. The recommendations, which should be attached to the submission as an annex, must be directly relevant to the themes of the discussion day as described above, and prioritized.

The deadline for the submission of written contributions is 31 July 2016. The Committee requests that written contributions be limited to a **maximum of seven pages (2500 words)**.

Previously published materials may also be submitted to the Committee, or distributed during the discussion day to other participants. Sufficient copies must be provided, as the Secretariat does not have resources for reproduction and distribution. Where such previously published material exceeds 7 pages in length, participants are required to ensure that this material is accompanied by an executive summary and table of contents.

Please note that only written contributions received in **electronic form** will be circulated. Written contributions will be circulated in their original language only and posted on the CRC DGD Website. The Committee reserves the right to refuse the publication of content that it considers inappropriate or containing abusive language.
