

Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child

Theme: Empowering children with disabilities for the enjoyment of their human rights, including through inclusive education

Concept note (as of 28 February 2019)

Date and venue: 4 March 2019, 9 - 11 a.m. and 4 - 6 p.m., Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva
(will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)

Objectives: Contribute to the empowerment of children with disabilities by highlighting the approaches and actions needed to overcome challenges they face in claiming their rights, particularly their equal right to education, and States' legal obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of children with disabilities. The meeting will be an opportunity to gather input and experiences on how children with disabilities can be empowered, including through their full inclusion in education on an equal basis with all children. This will be done by:

- Learning from experiences on how children with disabilities can be best supported to participate in decisions and processes affecting them, in order to ensure better respect for, protection and promotion of their rights.
- Assessing the barriers that contribute to the exclusion of children with disabilities from education, and hold them back from claiming their rights;
- Taking stock of key elements and approaches that contribute positively to the fulfilment of the rights of children with disabilities, particularly their right to access an inclusive, quality education at all levels;
- Identifying and learning from good practices to ensure the full inclusion of children with disabilities in their families, communities and in society
- Highlighting the importance of accountability to advance the rights of children with disabilities, particularly on the basis of effective monitoring of their situation and their inclusion in disaggregated national data and statistics

Morning (9 - 11 a.m.) **How children with disabilities can be empowered by realizing their rights, including the right to education**

Chair: H.E. Mr. Coly Seck, President of the Human Rights Council

Opening statement: Ms. Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Moderator: H.E. Mr. Ricardo González Arenas, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

Speakers and themes:

- **Mr. Jorge Cardona**, Member of Committee on the Rights of the Child
How realizing the rights of children with disabilities contributes to their empowerment
- **Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar**, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities
The obstacles and opportunities to empowering children with disabilities and realizing their right to be included in education
- **Ms. Dumitrița Cropivnitchi**, Children's Rights Advocate, Lumos
Experiences and opportunities for children with disabilities to be empowered to claim their rights, particularly through inclusive education

Video screening: Questions from children with disabilities
Video produced by the United Nations Children's Fund (duration: 1 min 22 sec)

**Afternoon
(4 - 6 p.m.)** **Including children with disabilities in education settings: good practices and accountability**

Chair: **H.E. Ms. Vesna Batistić Kos**, Vice-President of the Human Rights Council

Moderator: **H.E. Mr. Walter Stevens**, Ambassador and Head of the European Union Delegation to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

Speakers and themes:

- **Ms. María Soledad Cisternas Reyes**, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility
Good practices and measures to combat violence against children with disabilities within and beyond education settings
- **Ms. Afshan Khan, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia**, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Lessons from experience on empowering children with disabilities in different ways
- **Ms. Bushra Zulfiqar**, Education Director, Save the Children Bangladesh
Practical approaches to ensure accountability and remove stigma from children with disabilities in order to support their access to education

Outcome: The exchange of expert knowledge and experience will help to learn how children with disabilities can be empowered to claim their rights, including the right to education. It will serve to identify concrete good practices to effectively integrate an empowering approach to realizing the rights of children with disabilities, including through their inclusion in education.

Mandate: 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." In this vein and on the basis of its resolution 37/20, the Human Rights Council decided to convene at its 40th session the annual full-day meeting on empowering children with disabilities for the enjoyment of their human rights, including through inclusive education.

Format: 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, the latter guided by the moderator, will be followed by an interactive discussion divided into two slots and chaired, respectively, by the President and Vice-President of the Human Rights Council.

A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including the opening statement, moderator introduction, panellist presentations, responses to questions and concluding remarks. The remaining hour will be reserved for interventions from the floor, divided into two slots, for Member States and observers (2x12), national human rights institutions (2x1) and non-governmental organizations (2x2). The possibility for panellists to intervene between the two slots will depend on the amount of time used at the start of the meeting.

The list of speakers for the discussion will be established at the beginning of the meeting 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. Interpretation will be provided in the six United

Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

Accessibility:

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, the event will be made fully accessible. During the debate, international sign interpretation and real-time captioning in English will be provided and webcasted. In Room XX, four seats are reserved for participants using wheelchairs, in the seventh (last) row. Hearing loops are available for collection from the Accessibility focal point at the Secretariat desk. Oral statements may be embossed in Braille from any of the six official languages of the United Nations, upon request and following the procedure described in the “Accessibility guide to the Human Rights Council for persons with disabilities” (available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Accessibility.aspx>).

Background:

Children with disabilities hold the same rights as all children. Their empowerment depends upon these rights being realized – particularly the equal right to education without discrimination, which is an essential catalyst for their wider empowerment and access to all rights. Yet children with disabilities are far more likely to miss out on education than other children, and risk being placed in institutions or segregated settings which fail to support their participation and inclusion in their communities and in society. They are more likely to face multiple risks and rights violations from the moment of their birth throughout their lives, from their births not being registered, to being placed in care institutions where they may be subjected to violence, abuse and neglect, to facing heightened risk of all forms of violence, even when cared for by their families. Children with disabilities are further left behind due to their invisibility and exclusion from national data, and in situations of conflict or humanitarian crisis realizing their rights is an even greater challenge. The intersecting rights violations that children with disabilities experience are compounded by the barriers that they face in claiming their rights, including their right to be heard through participation in decisions affecting them, and to accessing justice and remedies for rights violations.

While the risks and challenges that children with disabilities experience are extensive, the opportunities to empower them and realize their rights are equally great. Their full inclusion in education together with all children is one crucial step towards their empowerment and the fulfilment of other key rights. It is also a central pathway to enable their active involvement in decisions and policies affecting them, towards realizing the right to be heard according to their evolving capacities. Beyond education, the empowerment of children with disabilities depends upon the implementation of integrated laws, policies and measures to tackle harmful social norms, to protect them from violence and abuse, to support their families and communities in enabling their inclusion, and to ensure effective monitoring, accountability and access to justice. In order to overcome the many challenges that children with disabilities face, a fully inclusive, integrated approach is essential, through which they are empowered to exercise their abilities and claim their rights.

Background documents:

- [Human Rights Council resolution 34/16](#) of 24 March 2017, “Rights of the child: protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”
- [Human Rights Council resolution 37/20](#) of 23 March 2018, “Rights of the child: protection of the rights of the child in humanitarian situations”
- Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on “empowering children with disabilities for the enjoyment of their human rights, including through inclusive education” (2019) ([A/HRC/40/27](#))