

CRC30 – What future for children and their rights? State of play and perspectives

18, 19 and 20 November, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Concept note

Rationale

1. On November 20, 2019, the entire planet will celebrate an important anniversary. Thirty years ago, on November 20, 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in New York. This new human rights treaty, dedicated specifically to children and binding on the countries that ratified it, immediately stood out for two reasons. First of all, it is the international treaty of all records: ratified the fastest and by the greatest number of countries. Secondly, and most importantly, the CRC elevates the child as a person, with his/her own rights, who can exercise them gradually as s/he grows up. And, at the heart of this mechanism, it enshrines the right of children to express their opinion and the obligation on families, communities and all authorities (school, political or legislative institutions, etc.) to really ask and take it into account.
2. Geneva has become the global hub of children's rights. On a historical level, Geneva is inseparable from the concept of childhood since Jean-Jacques Rousseau has made the child a person. Then came, among others, Edouard Claparède, founder of the field of pedagogy, Jean Piaget, founder of developmental psychology, or Julian de Ajuriaguerra, pioneer of child psychiatry. Not to mention Eglantyne Jebb, a great British lady, who wrote in Geneva, with the unwavering support of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the University of Geneva, the first Declaration of the Rights of the Child (the so-called Declaration of Geneva), adopted in 1924 by the League of Nations. And the list of personalities continues to grow ...
3. At present, the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva is the body that monitors the implementation of the CRC and receives delegations from all countries to report on the progress made in promoting the rights of the child. In parallel, a myriad of specialized NGOs are based in Geneva and ensure that countries meet their commitments.
4. By organizing this celebration of the 30th anniversary of the rights of the child, together with a high-level conference, Geneva and all its children's rights actors, including children, have a unique opportunity to focus the world's attention and to breathe renewed energy into for the well-being of children and their rights, often violated even in democratic and rich countries. To this end, this event, supported in particular by the Swiss Confederation and the Swiss Mission to the UN, the Canton and the City of Geneva, and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child will be organized in coordination with UN organizations, permanent missions and local and international civil society.
5. Lastly, the strong involvement of the University of Geneva, both through the Interfaculty Center for the Rights of the Child and the Rectorate, makes it possible to mobilize the students, researchers and professors concerned by this strategic axis on human rights. This academic presence is strengthened by the fact that a professor at UNIGE sits on the Committee on the Rights of the Child and that one of its Chairperson is closely linked to Geneva and its university.

The main organiser: Association 30 Ans de Droits de l'Enfant (30 Years of Children's Rights)

The Association "30 Years of Children's Rights" is a Geneva-based, not-for-profit, non-political and secular NGO founded in December 2017 on the initiative of [Dr. h.c. Jean Zermatten](#), the first Swiss member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and a former Juvenile Court judge, and [Prof. Philip Jaffé](#), a Swiss member – elected in June 2018 – of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Director of the Interfaculty Centre for Children's Rights at the University of Geneva.

The association's goals are

- To mark 30 years since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in partnership with the major public- and private-sector players in the field at international, national, canton and municipal level;
- To promote respect for and the application of children's rights, by setting up a series of scientific, cultural, recreational and leisure events based on children's rights, taking place in the city and canton of Geneva;
- To highlight the information, awareness-raising, promotion and training work relating to children's rights undertaken by the Republic and Canton de Geneva, the City of Geneva and the University of Geneva, in- and outside Switzerland;
- To raise the profile of the work of NGOs based in the Lake Geneva region that are active in the field of children's rights in- and outside Switzerland.

The bodies that are stakeholders in the NGO include the Republic and Canton of Geneva, the City of Geneva and the University of Geneva, along with a number of key civil society organisations and bodies involved in protecting and defending children.

The Statutes of the Association can be consulted [here](#) (in French).

General presentation of the event

Three days of celebration are proposed on 18, 19 and 20 November 2019 at the Palais des Nations, United Nations headquarters in Geneva.

This great event is designed in a spirit of inclusion to gather children, professionals working with children in the region and globally, international Geneva specialists from governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as UN entities, State representatives, academic representatives and renowned international personalities from the field of children's rights.

All actors, children and adults alike, will be invited to participate in the conference, as speakers, panellists or participants.

This event will be the culmination of a series of activities throughout 2019 and the starting point of a new community dedicated to the rights of the child, with the official launch of a new resource platform: www.childrightshub.org and renewed commitments for children's rights in the form of calls for action and pledges.

In parallel with the sessions planned in the program of the conference, the event will also include several exhibitions and the opportunity for participants to meet and discuss themes they have defined themselves.

Conference – 18, 19 and 20 November 2019

Bringing together political figures, local and international, children's rights professionals, academics and children active in the defence of their rights from around the world, this conference will be the major global event celebrating the 30th anniversary of the CRC.

This high-level, free public event will take place at the Palais des Nations, a symbol of the United Nations and International Geneva, and also a place where the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been drafted and negotiated.

Through 8 thematic discussions and different spaces promoting meetings and interactions between participants, it will allow the sharing of skills and experiences to launch a new collaborative dynamic to continue beyond November 20, 2019.

Side events at the conference:

- General exhibition space where different actors will present current activities, best practices and tools.
- Opening and presentation of two exhibitions:
 - Productions of Children Reporters on the situation of the rights of the child in 2019.
 - "Children's Drawings of God" by children from Brazil, Japan, Iran, Romania, Russia and Switzerland, with the support of the diplomatic missions of these countries
- Launch of the scientific anniversary book written by internationally recognised authors.
- Coverage of the event by Children Reporters and organization of a press conference on November 20, 2019 of the personalities present to which the Reporters Children will participate.

Target audience

- All children's rights actors present in Geneva, including local and international professionals, civil society actors, academics, UN actors (UNICEF, OHCHR, Committee on the Rights of the child) and children.
- Children active in the defense of children's rights from different parts of the world
- State actors working at national level on children's rights.
- International children's rights experts.
- UN diplomatic missions in Geneva.

Objectives

- Bring together all key children's rights actors in Geneva to discuss topical issues and key challenges, share experiences and design collective messages and commitments for the future of children's rights.
- Give an essential space to children active in the defense of children's rights to show the importance of child participation and make their opinion heard by all, including high-level international actors.
- Put children's rights at the heart of the international political agenda for the years to come.

Implementation strategy

An inclusive approach

A participatory approach was chosen for the conceptualization and implementation of the project. This concept note and programme include the suggestions and ideas of various stakeholders, including civil society actors, academia and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The plenary sessions will be broadcasted through live streaming, with the opportunity to participate online.

Children's participation

The right of the child to be heard on issues that concern him is at the heart of the CRC. The conference therefore proposes to integrate several children active in the defense of children's rights as participants, speakers and panellists throughout the three days.

Further, children participating to the conference will develop joint calls for action and commitments that will be shared during day 3 of the conference with high-level State and UN representatives, and the world through live streaming.

Organizers, collaborations and other partners

Association 30 Ans de Droits de l'Enfant (30 Years of the Rights of the Child) is the main organiser of the conference, in collaboration and coordination with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, OHCHR, UN diplomatic missions, international and national children's rights NGOs, the University of Geneva and local civil society.

It was specifically set up to support and coordinate all commemorative projects in and around Geneva and create a joint platform to centralise those and channel them into one major event, ie. this 3-day conference.

Confirmed NGO partners include:

Arigatou International • Child Rights Connect • Child Rights Now • CIVICUS • Defence for Children International • Enfants du Monde • Friends International • Hope and Homes for Children • International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) • Plan International • Terre des hommes International Federation • Save the Children International • Save the Children Switzerland • Service Social International • World Council of Churches • World Vision International

Programme of the event

The first two days (18 and 19 November) will be divided into periods devoted to topics at the heart of the children's rights agenda today and for the future. Each of these sessions will discuss the current situation and practices, the future and its challenges, and identify calls for action and commitments.

On the third day of the conference (20 November), a private session during the morning will be dedicated to identifying the key calls for action and commitments that the participants will want to share during the plenary event taking place in the afternoon. Children participants will have their own discussion and will determine their own messages.

Based on the 2 first days of discussion, calls for actions and commitments will be presented by civil society representatives, including children.

Greta Thunberg, child human rights defender dedicated to the protection of the environment, is invited to deliver a keynote speech and a high-level roundtable on perspectives for children's rights will be organised, including with Ms Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The event will close with a performance allowing all interested stakeholders, including State representatives, civil society and children to make short-term pledges for the better realisation of children's rights.

Then the UN High Commissioner will "pass the floor" to the UN Secretary General, M. Gutierres, in New York and the start of the event that will be held there for CRC30, including the virtual world summit organized by UNICEF.

During the three days of the conference, video clips of the experts present will be recorded and the conclusions of the discussions as well as the calls for action and pledges made will be included in a practical tool available in 2020 on the www.childrightshub.org platform.

Programme of the 3 days

Day 1 - 18 November 2019			
Time	Activity		
9.00-9.30	Opening of the conference – plenary session Ambassador of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva, President of the University of Geneva, President of the Canton of Geneva, Mayor of Geneva		
9.30-10.15	Keynote on the rights of children today – State of play – plenary session Children from the Child Advisory Board of Child Rights Connect.		
10.15- 10.30	Coffee/tea break		
10.30-12.30	Thematic working groups		
	Working Group 1 Child Protection – led by Friends International	Working Group 2 Children and Justice – led by Terre des Hommes International Federation and International Bar Association Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)	Follow-up to thematic colloquia – Next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children's rights and women's rights – led by Enfants du Monde ▪ Children's rights and religious beliefs
12.30-14.00	Lunch break (side events)		
14.00-15.15	Roundtable – plenary session - Children's participation		
15.15-15.30	Coffee/tea break		
15.30 – 17.30	Working Group 3 Impact of digital technologies and big data on children	Working Group 4 Radicalisation of children	Discussion around 3 topical issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alternative Care Guidelines - Global Study on Children deprived of liberty - International communications procedure for children
17.30.17.45	Closing of the day – plenary session		
17.45	Reception and presentation of the exhibitions		

Day 2 - 19 November 2019			
Time	Activity		
9.00-9.45	Keynote on the future of children's rights Children who have engaged in the Child Rights Now Initiative		
9.45-11.00	Roundtable – plenary session - Children human rights defenders		
11.00-13.00	Thematic Working Groups		
	Working Group 5 Children's rights and the environment – led by Terre des Hommes Germany and Center for International Environmental Law	Working Group 6 The developments of biotechnology and the concept of child – led by International Social Service (ISS)	Current academic research on the rights of the child Led by the University of Geneva
13.00-14.30	Lunch break (side events)		
14.00-17.00	Hackathon Better collaboration for a better implementation of children's rights	Open forum Group discussions on topics selected by participants	Brain dates Bilateral discussions
17.00-17.30	Closing of the day – plenary session		
17.30	Reception and launch of the publication “30 Years of Children's Rights”		

Day 3 - 20 November 2019	
Time	Activity
9.00-12.00	<p>Looking forward: commitments and messages from civil society for children's rights [closed session for participants who attended the 2 first days of the conference]</p> <p>Based on the discussions held during the two first days of the conference, interested child and adult participants will discuss and decide on the key messages and commitments they will share during the official anniversary ceremony.</p>
12.00-13.00	Lunch break
13.00-13.30	<p>Opening of the official anniversary ceremony</p> <p>President of the Swiss Confederation, Director of UNOG, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child</p>
13.30-14.00	<p>30 Years of Children's Rights : State of play and vision for the future</p> <p>Children and civil society representatives</p>
14.00-14.30	Carte blanche to Greta Thunberg
14.30-15.15	<p>What future for children's rights? High-level roundtable</p> <p>Including: High Commissioner for Human Rights, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and children human rights defenders</p>
15.15-16.00	<p>Closing of the ceremony and link to the New York ceremony</p> <p>Performance: the CRC Preamble sung by a choir of children and pledges from State and civil society representatives</p> <p>Formal handover between the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva and the UN Secretary General in New York.</p>