

NGO Caucuses and Other Events

**during the First Substantive Session (New York, 30 May - 2 June 2000)
in preparation for the Special Session on Children**

I. Non-Governmental Organisation Caucuses

Some NGO Caucuses have taken place during the First Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee of the Special Session on Children.

While the Child Rights Caucus focused on the substance of a future agenda for children, other Caucuses focused on specific issues or linked to a region of the world.

Caucuses on specific issues

Caucuses focussing on specific issues discussed, among others, the following:

- Processes of getting Non-Governmental Organizations' (NGOs) views and experiences to shape the future agenda;
- Examining and creating opportunities for networking;
- Sharing best practices;
- Identifying how NGO activities are contributing to progress towards the World Summit for Children goals, and examining how best to fully participate in a global movement for children.

Summaries of the statements of such Caucuses are available in the Report of Official NGO presentations during the First Substantive Session.

Regional Caucuses

These were co-ordinated by the NGO Committee on UNICEF. Four Regional Caucuses were formed - Africa (including North Africa), Europe, Latin America & the Caribbean and South Asia. They raised child rights' issues of direct concern to their regions and focused on preparing inputs for the Special Session on Children.

Summaries of the statements of Regional Caucuses are available in the Report of Official NGO presentations during the First Substantive Session.

Child Rights Caucus

The Child Rights Caucus was organised in working groups according to clusters of principles and rights of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Caucus includes more than 35 international and national organisations and coalitions

from around the world committed to protecting and promoting the human rights of children, and to promoting the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The outcome was a draft document distributed to delegations, "A Child Rights Agenda for the Coming Decade". It identifies key issues that must receive priority attention in any future plan of action for children and directs specific recommendations to governments. Issues covered include the right to identity and nationality, discrimination, juvenile justice, child participation, poverty, education, health, disability, parent/family support, armed conflict, violence, child labour, sexual exploitation, and trafficking. The draft document is currently being revised. An updated version should be available in September 2000.

A summary of the presentation of this Caucus is available in the Report of Official NGO presentations during the First Substantive Session.

II. Other events

Voices from the grassroots on the rights of the child

This interactive panel was facilitated by Plan International. Speakers included NGOs from the South who addressed issues related to mobilisation of children, grassroots voice and participation in the shaping of the global movement for children.

The panel was an opportunity for NGOs to exchange experiences and learn from each other to ensure that more children can be brought in as actors in their own development, and not just recipients of development aid.

It was noted that the challenge for implementing the rights of the child is two-fold: to give children and adolescents the means to say what is on their minds; and to bring them in as development partners in actions and policy-making at the local, municipal, national and global levels.

A Young People's Panel

During the First Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee of the Special Session on Children, an informal panel of young people was organised (1 June 2000). The panel, co-hosted by the Government of Canada and UNICEF, was composed of six young people -- all under the age of 20 -- representing Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, the Philippines and South Africa. The panel was chaired by Ms. Hortense ME Bla from Côte d'Ivoire, a youth activist who was a panellist in the official panel on emerging issues for children.

The panellists spoke passionately about their own experiences and the difficult realities of life for children in many parts of the world. Robin Anawak from Canada spoke about his

experience working with disabled youth and the issue of respect and equality. Romylyn Alejado, who is a youth broadcaster for an children radio in the Philippines, made specific recommendations on 'child-friendly media'. An indigenous youth from Guatemala, Luisa Velásquez, voiced the need for young women to have access to information and services to protect their reproductive rights. The issue of providing opportunities and choices for girls in the field of science was raised by Agnes Lebeth from South Africa. An active member of the Colombian Children Movement for Peace, Dilia Lozano, demonstrated the possibility of what young people can do in creating peace and reconciliation in a conflict-ridden country. Lastly, Nikki Sanchez-Hood from Canada made a plea that teachers should first have respect for students if they would like to gain their respect.

The panel provided an excellent opportunity for young participants at the PrepCom to share their views and experiences on a wide range of issues affecting their lives. The panellists challenged the delegates to the PrepCom that they consider young people to be their true partners in the process to the Special Session and in their own countries.

Global Movement for Children

The panel discussion featured updates on actions and future steps in building a global movement for children at the regional and global levels. UNICEF Regional Directors made comprehensive presentations that were supplemented by contributions and comments from NGO participants. NGOs were also updated on CSO mobilisation activities at the global level. For more information, see the report of the discussion in [A UNICEF Update on Actions and Future Steps for the global movement for children.](#)

Book Launch

Save the Children, Sweden and UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia presented a new publication "*Children's Rights - Turning Principles into Practice*". The book is composed of a collection of essays written by children's rights activists with experience in different parts of the world through their work with UNICEF and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as within governments and in international and local non-governmental groups. For more information, please contact Mr. David Lundqvist, Save the Children Sweden (Telephone: 46 8 698 90 75; Fax: 46 8 698 90 12; E-mail: david.lundqvist@rb.se). You may also visit Save the Children on-line bookshop at www.rb.se/bookshop.

Exhibition

The exhibition, organised by Plan International, some NGOs and UNICEF included panels and messages around the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the global movement for children themes; interactive media products on grassroots projects; dioramas as well as live chat lines and project discussions.