

**Proposed Guidelines on the Participation & Selection
of Under-18 Delegates to the UN Special Session on Children,
New York, 8-10 May 2002, and the Children's Forum, 5-7 May 2002**

The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/26 (paragraphs 10 and 11) on Preparations for the Special Session on Children '*reiterates* the importance of a participatory process at the national, regional and international levels' and '*highlights* the important role of children and young people in this process, and in this regard encourages States to facilitate and promote their active contribution to the preparatory process, including the work of the Preparatory Committee, and the special session.'

WHO could be the Under 18 Representatives?

Key considerations in the selection of young delegates may include:

- Children who are already actively involved in regional, national or international initiatives leading to the Special Session (*to inform each other on the outcomes of these consultations and to share experiences at the international level*);
- Children with an interest, direct experience or expertise in issues that pertain to the outcome of the Special Session, e.g. childhood disability, education, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, environment, etc.;
- Children who will be able to speak on behalf of a broad cross-section of their country's children;
- Children with a solid understanding and experience of issues related to children and young people in their country;
- Children who are part of existing peer groups and who can feed back their experiences, and propose ways of action to other children when they return after the Special Session;
- It would be desirable for children to have a working knowledge of one of the UN languages, or to be accompanied by a delegate who volunteers to interpret for them.

Note: With regard to the selection and participation at the Children's Forum (5-7 May), please be advised that because of limited space and the large number of children expected to enrol at the Forum, UNICEF cannot accommodate any new nominations from NGOs who did not already pre-register children for the Children's Forum in September 2001.

Number and Age of Participants:

The CRC applies to children up to the age of 18, therefore, it is recommended that children up to the age of 18 are selected for participation in the Special Session on Children. The **Children's Forum** is open to children **UNDER the age of 18 who are members of government- or accredited NGO delegations attending the Special Session on Children**. When selecting children for participation in the Special Session, it would be advisable to have a balance in the following areas :

- Gender
- Age of participants (i.e. 10-14 group/15-17 group)
- Religion
- Rural versus urban place of residence
- In- and out of school
- Socio-economic background
- Ethnic background

Note: With regard to participation in the Children's Forum, UNICEF can only accommodate the number of children pre-registered for the Children's Forum of September 2001¹. Even though

¹ The total number of pre-registered participants for the Children's Forum, as of September 2001 was 369. The breakdown per delegation was as follows:

Government delegations: 183 children from 132 countries

NGO delegations: 186 children from 131 NGOs.

the Children's Forum is meant for children and adolescents *under the age of 18*, those children who were confirmed to participate and who have turned 18 between September and May will still be welcome to participate.

HOW to Select Children for Participation?

One suggestion with many options is to select children through a competition. Ask children to:

- Write about their life in a creative way, perhaps a poem, journal entry or letter;
- Write a story or essay about their experiences with children's rights in their community, in their country or in their region;
- Write a news story to submit to newspapers at home, interviewing your delegation and other delegations;
- Create artwork that expresses their vision of child rights.

To promote a competition, you will need to send out notices across the country to children's organisations, schools, and national and regional events where children are participating. You may also wish to advertise in local newspapers or through public announcements on radio or television. At the same time this will raise awareness within your country of your government's and civil society's preparation and involvement in the Special Session. Ensure that the language you use is child-friendly. Though a competition may be time consuming, it will allow you to make a choice from a wide range of interested participants.

It is strongly advised that you include children themselves in the selection process. By selecting their peers, they will become part of the process and it will be easier to identify with the work to be undertaken.

Preparing Children for Participation in the Special Session on Children:

In the spirit of true participation, children should be properly informed and guided by adults prior to their arrival in New York. They would need to meet with other members of their delegation and be part of planning meetings. It is advised that they be briefed on their country's policies and programmes for children and on the objectives of the Special Session. Information can be found at the following web sites: www.unicef.org/specialsession or www.crin.org (the web site of the Child Rights Information Network). A reader/child-friendly version of the draft outcome document of the Special Session is available on the CRIN web site too.