

Statement by 61ⁱ Members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs At COP26

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Children and Youth:

The climate crisis is **a child rights' crisis**. It poses an unprecedented threat to the health, nutrition, education, development, survival, and future potential of all children, everywhere.

I am honored to deliver this statement on behalf of 61 Members of the *Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs* -- a group of Member States who are committed to advocating for child rights, child well-being and meaningful child participation in UN intergovernmental processes and beyond.

As we participate in these proceedings, people around the world are experiencing a triple threat of climate change, environmental degradation, and pollution -- causing an unprecedented planetary crisis. Children and young people are the **most vulnerable** to the impacts of these crises.

Today, we address you standing in solidarity with those who are *least responsible* for the current state of our planet, but who will bear the brunt of the consequences if we do not act urgently: **our current and future generations of children**.

Children face distinct and heightened risks from the escalating impacts of climate change. A recent UNICEF report – *the Children's Climate Risk Index* – presents clear evidence showing that over 99% of children are already exposed to at least one climate or environmental shock. One billion children – meaning nearly one out of two children in the world – are at an *extremely high risk* from the impacts of climate change. The survival of these children is under imminent threat, and this *is not acceptable*. This is not only a violation of their human rights, but a threat to the stability and future **for all of us**.

Children and youth have been the face of social movements around the world demanding action on climate change and environmental degradation. They have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to work in partnership with us, to implement the solutions required to tackle these crises. Yet their voices are often excluded from official proceedings and decision-making processes.

Next year will mark 30 years since the UNFCCC Convention was drafted. However, in that time, ***the UNFCC has never seen a decision focused on children and young people in climate action***. Additionally, the majority of Nationally Determined Contributions to date contain no reference to children or youth. **This consistent omission must be rectified**. We must ensure greater and more meaningful inclusion and consideration of children and youth in national planning.

We support young people's right to be heard on matters affecting their lives and we acknowledge, in particular, YOUNGO's tireless efforts to make the UNFCCC process more aware of the needs and priorities of children and young people, including through their collaboration with champion governments.

The *Action for Climate Empowerment* or ACE negotiations happening at this year's COP provide a critical opportunity to include provisions for greater child and youth engagement in climate action, in order to enhance their impact both within and beyond the UNFCCC process. We can demonstrate our willingness to do better by children and young people by including in the ACE outcome an in-session workshop on children and young people's priorities and participation in climate action during the mid-year's sessions of the subsidiary bodies in 2022.

Colleagues, we can no longer afford to omit a child and youth focus in our climate policies. As members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs, we are committed to increasing the space for children and youth to be part of conversations and decision-making processes on these issues in our own countries, as well as through regional and global level processes.

We hope you will also support this call, and that we can work together in creating a safe and sustainable future **for every child**, and for future generations. Thank you.

ⁱAndorra, Argentina, Armenia, Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Egypt, European Union, Estonia, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Korea (Republic of), Lithuania, Luxembourg, Lesotho, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, United Kingdom, Uruguay