

## Joint Statement of 65<sup>1</sup> Members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs on the Zero Draft of the SDG Summit Political Declaration

Colleagues,

I have the pleasure to present this joint statement on behalf of 65 members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs, which my country co-chairs together with Bulgaria and Luxembourg.

Eight years ago, our Group was established as an advocacy platform for a cross-regional coalition of Member States to champion child rights during the negotiations of what is now the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since then, we have remained active in promoting children's wellbeing and rights that are at the heart of sustainable development.

As we take stock of the implementation of the first half of the 2030 Agenda and discuss how to accelerate progress for the next seven years, we must do so through a child rights lens. The 2030 Agenda has a clear vision: *"A world which invests in its children, a world in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation, girls enjoy full gender equality, and children are provided with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities."*

Co-facilitators,

The SDGs and children's rights go hand in hand. Children's rights cannot be realized without the full implementation of the SDGs and vice-versa.

The reality is that our world is at a crossroads and children are at risk of being left behind. At the midpoint of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the world faces multiple overlapping crises that have disproportionate and devastating impacts on children's lives. The SDG Summit Political Declaration must reaffirm everyone's commitment to leave no one behind and recognize the importance of children and child rights in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Children constitute a group of distinct rights holders under international law and the full scope of their rights must be considered in the Political Declaration. They are subjects of the SDG Summit and active stakeholders in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development before, during and after the Summit.

The Political Declaration should recognize how children's lives have been impacted in profound ways by the COVID-19 pandemic, protracted conflicts and accelerating climate crises: systematic attention to child rights is necessary for the UN to be fully inclusive and able to deliver on its mandate across all pillars.

The third section of the Political Declaration discusses concrete means of implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving the SDGs by 2030. We would like to highlight the following points:

- We regret that the current zero draft omits any references to **child rights**.

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<sup>1</sup> Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, European Union\* (observer), Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Korea (Republic of), Lithuania, Luxembourg, Lesotho, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay

- **Critical social investments in children must be a central pillar in solutions to accelerate SDG financing, across national and international frameworks and systems.** We must ensure investments in children are prioritized and informed by disaggregated data that help us identify and reach the most vulnerable children.
- In line with the world's investments in the Transforming Education Summit that took place last year, we highlight the importance of **foundational learning and education for every child, including quality education in emergency situations.**
- **Children and youth are our future.** The protection of the most vulnerable children, especially those living in humanitarian contexts, should be seen as investment in both the current and future generations. We therefore underline the importance of **youth engagement and child agency in sustainable development, especially in disaster risk reduction.**
- The **digital world** provides extraordinary and growing opportunities. The lack of an explicit mention of **child rights and safety in a digital environment** will put our most vulnerable communities at risk.
- **Mental health** must be seen as a catalyst for acceleration towards the achievement of all SDGs.
- **Finally, children are critical agents of change. As such, the SDGs must be delivered *for and with* all children.** The 2030 Agenda brought together the economic, social and environmental pillars of development, thereby providing a framework for progress that can be achieved when all parts of society, including children, work together. Children must be meaningfully included across the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. This includes raising their awareness of their rights in line with the SDGs, involving them in the delivery and monitoring processes, and supporting platforms for consultations as part of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

Our children and future generations are counting on us to ensure that we accelerate progress and deliver a world fit for children.

I thank you.

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