

**Joint oral statement to the Annual Full Day Meeting on the Rights of the Child of the
Human Rights Council (16th Session) – March 9 2011**

Thank you Mr. President...

The following statement on the care, protection and social reintegration of children living on the street is made on behalf of

SOS Children's Villages International, Foundation ECPAT International, The International Catholic Child Bureau, International Federation Terre des Hommes, The Consortium for Street Children, Defence for Children International, in special consultative status with ECOSOC; and the International Movement ATD Fourth World, World Vision International, in general consultative status with ECOSOC; and The African Child Policy Forum, Red Latinoamericana de Acogimiento Familiar (RELAF)

Children living on the street are fully entitled, and require without discrimination, the *special assistance and protection*¹ due from the State when living outside the family environment. The placement of these children in large-scale care institutions, or criminalising them and incarcerating them in prisons, are inappropriate responses.

Furthermore, children living on the street also have the right to know and be cared for by their parents². Whether reintegrated in their families, or in alternative care, the State also retains the responsibility to guarantee their access to, inter alia, education, health care, and adequate nutrition, in order to ensure their full development and social reintegration.

With respect to these rights and with reference to the *Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children* welcomed by the General Assembly on 20 November 2009, we call on States to review, reform, or introduce relevant legislation for

- Appropriate alternative care ,
- Family reintegration ,
- Physical and psychological recovery, and
- Preparation and support for the transition out of alternative care.

Such legislation must guarantee:-

1. Individualised, case-by-case decision-making to secure appropriate care for the child either in the family or in alternative care;
2. the full participation of children and, when possible and appropriate, their parents and family, in decision-making;

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – Article 20.1

² CRC, Art.7.1

3. the availability of family-based, small group, or other appropriate informal or formal forms of alternative care as opposed to large institutions or imprisonment;
4. planned and supported family strengthening interventions to facilitate successful family reintegration - if in the best interests of the child;
5. access to specialized therapeutic assessment and services to address any concerns for physical and psychological recovery;
6. leaving care planning and after care support tailored to needs of the individual child empowering them through, e.g. education, life skills training, or job placements;

In summary, responses to the situation of children living in the street must secure the immediate and appropriate care and protection of children either in their families or in appropriate alternative care. In all cases either in their families, or in alternative care, individualised responses in the best interests of the child are a fundamental requirement to ensuring the long term social reintegration of these children.

Mr President, thank you.....