

Human Rights Council
32nd session

Item 3 – General Debate

20 June 2016

Joint Statement: Child Rights Connect, ATD Fourth World, Consortium for Street Children, DCI International, ECPAT International, Eurochild, Franciscans International, International Council of Women, Make Mother Matter, Marist International Solidarity Foundation, Plan International, Save the Children, Women’s World Summit Foundation, Alliance for Children Mauritius*, Child Rights International Network*, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children.*

Check against delivery.

Thank you Mr President.

As children’s rights organisations working with and for children, Child Rights Connect and the co-sponsoring organisations would like to draw the attention of the Human Rights Council to the current discussions on “the protection of the family” which raise serious concerns regarding the human rights of children.

We would like to make clear that, given its nature and mandate, any discussion or initiative on the “family” at the Human Rights Council must take place through a human rights-based approach, including from a children’s rights perspective in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC).

Under international human rights law, children, as all family members, are individual rights holders whose rights are entitled to protection and promotion by States; the family itself as a group is not a subject of rights.

Any discussion at the Human Rights Council placing the “family” as a starting point of discussion to the detriment of the rights of individual members of the family including children, therefore runs contrary to existing international human rights law.

It is also clear that invoking the rights and responsibilities of parents can never be used to justify the denial or violation of children’s rights, both inside and outside of family environments.

While the family environment is the primary place where children can live and thrive, the rights of children, including the most vulnerable, are violated in some families, notably through violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. “Protecting” or “preserving” tradition, culture, custom or religion can never be invoked to justify any form of violence or discrimination against children including on the basis of family status, both inside and outside of family environments.

* Organisations without ECOSOC status

To ensure that the rights of all children are respected without discrimination, States therefore have an obligation to support and strengthen all forms of families in different contexts, in order for families to fulfil their child-rearing responsibilities and to empower children in the realisation of their rights. Where needed, States should also provide alternative care for children, in respect of their rights.

We therefore urge the Council and States to:

- 1. Reaffirm that children are individual rights-holders whose rights cannot be overlooked, limited or negated, whether they live in a family environment or not.**
- 2. Explicitly recall States' obligations to protect and respect the human rights of all individuals in family environments, including by prohibiting and working to eliminate all forms of violence against all children.**
- 3. Acknowledge and respect all forms of families in different contexts in order to guarantee children's right to non-discrimination, including on the basis of family status.**
- 4. Reaffirm the need to recognize, support and strengthen all forms of families in different contexts to ensure the fulfilment of the individual rights of all their members, including children.**

Thank you Mr. President.