

Joint NGO Oral Statement by Save the Children, CIVICUS and 17 NGOs<sup>1</sup>  
OHCHR report on 'Practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society, based on good practice and lessons learned'

Mr President,

This statement is made on behalf of Save the Children, CIVICUS and 17 NGOs<sup>2</sup>.

A strong, diverse and independent civil society is also a space for children. Children, who constitute more than 30% of the world's population, have the right to be heard and participate in different spheres of society<sup>3</sup>. Children want to participate in public processes<sup>4</sup>. We need them to speak out to better respond to their situation. Despite this, children's voices are often marginalized.

We welcome the OHCHR report on practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society<sup>5</sup>. To ensure that civil society is also a safe, meaningful and enabling space for children, we call on UN Member States to:

- Put in place and fully implement **legal frameworks** that guarantee all children's rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly and access to information compliant with the UNCRC.
- Create **public and political environments** where children's voices are valued by adults, their participation encouraged and their recommendations given due weight. Political leaders at the highest level need to support children as civic actors.
- Ensure that children have access to age-appropriate and timely **information** in a language they understand.
- Create avenues for **children to participate in policy development, planning and decision-making**, including through the establishment and resourcing of child-friendly, age-appropriate and safe formal mechanisms and spaces where they can engage with decision-makers at all levels.
- Provide **long-term support and resources** for an independent civil society, including children's own organizations. As recommended in the OHCHR report, human rights and civic education should be integrated into curricula and training programmes<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa, Alliance for Children Mauritius, ATD Fourth World, the Campaign for the Children and Young People Assembly for Wales, Children Foundation Mauritius, Children's Rights Alliance for England, Child Rights Connect, Consortium for Street Children, Defence for Children International, Edmund Rice International, Eurochild, Hope & Homes for Children, International Catholic Child Bureau, International Council of Women, Plan International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, Together – Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> UNCRC Articles 12, 13 and 15

<sup>4</sup> Centre for Children's Rights and Save the Children (2016), *Enabling the exercise of civil and political rights: The Views of Children*, and Centre for Children's Rights (2015), *Towards Better Investment in the Rights of the Child: The Views of the Children*

<sup>5</sup> UN OHCHR, *Practical recommendations for the creation and maintenance of a safe and enabling environment for civil society, based on good practices and lessons learned*, A/HRC/32/20

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

Children want to engage in civic action<sup>7</sup>. We need to ensure that all children, including the most excluded groups of children, have the space, support and respect for their rights to become equal actors for change in their societies.

Thank you.



<sup>7</sup> Centre for Children's Rights, op. cit.