

Geneva, April 2016

Dear DCI members,

Hoping this message finds you well, the International Secretariat of Defence for Children International (DCI-IS) shares the latest updates from Geneva, particularly with regard the recently concluded 31st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC-31), which took place from 29 February – 24 March.

The HRC-31 is the first session of 2016, year which marks the Council's 10th anniversary, to this end a decision was made to convene a high-level panel discussion focused on the Council's achievements and challenges which will take place during the HRC-32 (June 2016). 2016 also marks the 50th anniversary of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and for which the HRC_31 held a high-level panel (01 March).

All relevant documentation to the session is available [online](#) in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

➤ **JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN**

The [Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty \(GSCDL\)](#): DCI continues to coordinate the NGO Panel for the GSCDL, which is currently made up of over ninety NGOs from around the world. We continue to work towards the concrete advancement of this important Study and to this end, during the HRC-31, we held a side-event together with the key UN agencies: the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence against Children (O/SRSG/VAC), Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG/CAAC), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The event aimed to mobilize political support and commitments to support the Global Study process, and included a keynote [video message](#) from the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Eliasson, which underlined the need for an urgent (financial and political) commitment towards the cause. Peggy Hicks, Director of the Research and Right to Development Division for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) indicated that her office would be willing to host the Secretariat for the Study, should funding be made available. Anna Giudice Saget of UNODC added that UNODC would be willing to support the analysis and collection of data for the Study, again when funding would be made available. In this regard, DCI delivered a [statement](#) to the HRC during the interactive dialogue with the SRSG/VAC (08 March) encouraging member States to support the Study. DCI will continue, together with other member of the NGO Panel and agencies of the UN Task Force, to work towards reaching concrete financial and political commitments in order to bring the Study to life. The preliminary phase (March 2014 – ongoing) which included the DCI led campaign calling for the Study and galvanizing political support should conclude soon. Once funding is secured, an apposite Secretariat will be set up and Independent Expert appointed. DCI national sections will be actively involved in the implementation phase of the Study and the IEC will be discussing and mapping an action plan to this end.

During HRC-31, DCI also organized a side-event to present the very first [European Practical Guide for the monitoring of places where children are deprived of their liberty](#), a project which was led by DCI-Belgium together with DCI - France, DCI - The Netherlands, DCI-Italy, DCI-International Secretariat and other key stakeholders including the Council of Europe (Coe). The



Practical Guide is an innovative tool that offers a child sensitive and preventive perspective on the monitoring of child detention facilities. DCI also delivered a [statement](#), during the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Torture (08 March), calling on Member States to establish independent mechanisms to ensure proper monitoring of child detention facilities and to use the Practical Guide as a blueprint document for action.

The HRC-31 also saw the adoption of relevant resolutions on the issue of justice, including: a **resolution (A/HRC/31/L.1) on the integrity of the judicial system** calling upon member States to provide access to an effective remedy to all those who have been subject to prolonged arbitrary arrest and / or physical and mental suffering due to the lack of access to the general judicial system. A **resolution (A/HRC/31/L.18) on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities** was also adopted, urging States to take adequate measure to address the overrepresentation of persons belonging to minorities in pre-trial detention or prison and remove obstacles that prevent minorities from reporting a violation of their rights or accessing formal justice. A resolution ([A/HRC/31/L.26/Rev.1](#)) was also adopted on **torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment - safeguards to prevent torture during police custody and pre-trial detention**, urging all States to adopt, implement and fully comply with legal and procedural safeguards against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; this resolution also requests the UN Office of the High Commissioner to convene, in 2017, an intersessional seminar with the objective of exchanging national experiences and practices.

➤ **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) AND CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

The HRC-31 included the **Annual Day on the Rights of the Child** (07 March), which this year was dedicated to “**Information and communications technology (ICT) and child sexual exploitation**”. On this occasion, DCI co-sponsored a [statement](#) delivered by Plan International, which stressed that ICTs, although an important tool to empower children and strengthen protection systems (i.e. through the digitalization of birth certificates), require corresponding measures to safeguard children. The Council adopted its corresponding annual resolution on the Rights of the Child ([A/HRC/31/L.9/Rev.1](#)).

➤ **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)**

The annual panel on mainstreaming (29 February) was dedicated this year to the **Sustainable Development Goals**: “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and human rights, with an emphasis on the right to development”. DCI delivered a joint [statement](#) together with another 16 NGOs, calling on member States to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a holistic and integrated manner and to adopt a robust system of accountability spanning from local through to national and international levels, including the UN human rights mechanisms and procedures. Next year’s **Annual Day on the Rights of the Child (March 2017)** will be dedicated specifically to “Protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. DCI, as co-covenor and member of the Working Group on Children and Violence (WG/CAV), will continue to work on joint activities related to the effective realization of the SDGs.

In addition, as member of the Working Group on Investment in Children (WG/IiC), DCI co-sponsored a [statement](#) welcoming the [OHCHR follow-up report on investment in children's rights](#) and calling on States to promote change in the way public resources are mobilized,



equitably allocated and effectively spent to best realize children's rights - particularly in light of the 2030 agenda.

A side-event was also organized by the O/SRSG/VAC to launch the [High Time Movement to End Violence against Children initiative](#), aiming to stimulate and support initiatives designed to stop violence against children worldwide and reach the violence-related targets in the SDGs, especially SDG target 16.2 to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. Also to note, DCI is part of the [Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children](#) which was assembled to ensure the violence related targets of the SDGs are reached.

In a related event (07 March), UNICEF and the European Union launched a [Child Rights Toolkit for integrating child rights in development cooperation](#), which examines how child rights can be made a priority in all sectors of development and aid.

➤ PROTECTION OF THE FAMILY

In reaction to last year's HRC resolution ([A/HRC/29/L.25](#)) on the protection of the family, DCI, together with other child rights NGOs, formed an apposite Task Force in order to continue to cover this rising theme and ensure that children's rights are not undermined, but are considered as autonomous within a family structure. To this end, a [joint statement](#) was delivered (11 March).

➤ UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)

The HRC-31 adopted [Universal Periodic Review](#) outcomes for 14 States, including Lebanon, Mauritania and Australia – where DCI has national presence. In light of the UPR outcomes of Mauritania, AMSME/DCI-Mauritania was in Geneva to share a [statement](#) (only available in French) on the need to tackle gender-based violence against girls, especially sexual abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM) and early & forced marriage.

In a decision ([A/HRC/31/L.4](#)) on the next cycle of the UPR, the HRC decided that the third cycle of the UPR will commence in April/May 2017.

➤ HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In a resolution ([A/HRC/31/L.28](#)) on **protecting human rights defenders addressing economic, social and cultural rights**, the Council called upon all States to take all measures necessary to ensure the rights and safety of human rights defenders, including those working towards the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

In a resolution ([A/HRC/31/L.21](#)) on the **promotion and protection of human rights in the context of peaceful protests**, the Council called upon all States to promote a safe and enabling environment for individuals and groups to exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, of expression and of association.

➤ CONFLICT AREAS

In a resolution ([A/HRC/31/L.36](#)) on the **right of the Palestinian people to self-determination**, the Council called upon Israel to end its occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and reaffirmed its support for the solution of two States,



Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security.

In a resolution ([A/HRC/31/L.37](#)) on the **human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem**, the Council called for urgent attention to the plight and the rights of Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli jails.

In a resolution ([A/HRC/31/L.38](#)) on **ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem**, the Council requested the UN High Commissioner to conduct a comprehensive review detailing the status of implementation of the recommendations to all parties by the relevant Human Rights Council mechanisms, and to present a report to the Council at its 35th session (June 2017).

In a resolution ([A/HRC/31/L.39](#)) on **Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan**, the Council demanded that Israel immediately cease all settlement activities in all these areas.

In a resolution ([A/HRC/31/L.31](#)) on **human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan**, the Council determined that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel that seek to alter the character and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan, are null and void.

DCI – Palestine presented a [statement](#) calling for a condemnation of Israeli forces' use of excessive force in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, against Palestinians. DCI called on the UN Secretary General to list Israeli forces in the annex of his upcoming annual report on children and armed conflict in light of the intensified violence in the West Bank, that has claimed the lives of forty children at the hands of Israeli forces.

Since the resignation in January 2016 of the **UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967**, the HRC-31 appointed Mr. [Stanley Michael LYNK \(Canada\)](#) to the position.

In a resolution ([A/HRC/31/L.5](#)) on the **human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic**, the Council decided to extend for one year the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) and demanded that all parties take all appropriate steps to protect civilians.

In a resolution ([A/HRC/31/L.20](#)) on the **technical assistance and capacity-building to improve human rights in Libya**, the Council urged all parties to cease violations of human rights and requested the UN High Commissioner to continue its close engagement with the UN Support Mission in Libya in order to provide coordinated human rights technical assistance to the Government of Libya and to present a written report to the Council at its 34th session (March 2017).

32ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (HRC-32):

The **next Human Rights Council session (HRC-32) will take place 13 June – 01 July 2016**. Issues of interest to be addressed include: migrants, independence of judges & lawyers, trafficking, discrimination and violence against women– inter alia.



UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION (UNGASS) ON THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM

The [UNGASS](#) on the world drug problem will take place in New York (19-21 April). DCI together with other NGOs has put together a public [statement](#) to ensure that children's rights are holistically addressed and considered in these discussions; furthermore, the drug use and production is linked child deprivation of liberty – thus an important issue to address as a means of prevention.

UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC COMMITTEE):

During its **71st session** (11 January – 29 January), the CRC Committee reviewed - among the countries where DCI has national presence - France, under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. **DCI – France** had presented a [stakeholders report](#) to the CRC Committee for the review, and DCI representatives from France travelled to Geneva to follow the discussions and meet with CRC Committee members directly. A delegation of children (high-school students) also participated in the session and were able to conduct an interview with Ms. Idrissi, member of the CRC Committee - more information on the activities [here](#).

The next session of the CRC Committee (**72nd session**) will take place from **17 May – 03 June**. For more details on the session, you can visit the official [website](#).

For further information on any of the different points, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With many thanks & all the best,

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