

Human Rights Council 45th session

Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the oral update of the HC on the human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic

14 September 2020

Madam High Commissioner,

This statement is submitted on behalf of World Vision International, Child Rights Connect, Defence for Children International, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages and Terre des Hommes.

With the disruption of health, social and educational infrastructures, and the loss of the protective school environment caused by the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, children are facing deprivation of their rights and high levels of stress impacting on all aspects of their lives.

The socio-economic fallout from COVID-19 is now amplifying the daily struggles of the families in most vulnerable situations everywhere, in particular those in fragile context and relying on daily earning and access to informal economies, or support by aid agencies and governments.

Available data show that quarantine measures and restrictions as well as the economic consequences of this crisis, put children, especially girls, at heightened risk of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and unintended adolescent pregnancy and cut them off from essential child protection and sexual and reproductive health services.

Although children and young people, in particular girls, are hardly hit by the pandemic, they are traditionally excluded from important discussions that affect their lives, or only included on an ad hoc basis.

Therefore we call on the UN and its member states to apply a child-right's based approach and:

- to seize the opportunity to ensure increased and sustained engagement of children and young people in discussions so that their perspectives are heard, their opinions and their needs are met, at the national, regional and international levels;
- to take children's best interest into account in all responses to COVID-19 by ensuring that international human rights law and standards are at the center of all responses and that public measures limiting access to education, freedom of movement or impacting economic activity are necessary, proportional and temporary.
- to strengthen social protection measures that reach the most affected families and children, and to build social safety nets that will cushion the shock from future pandemics.

We thank you Madame High Commissioner for this update, and we encourage you and your Office to continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic on children's rights, including by taking into account children's views, and to include recommendations in this regard in your report to the Council at its forty-sixth session.