2nd July 2020

Human Rights Council – 43rd session

ITEM 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children

Delivered by Defence for Children International (DCI)

Madam President,

Defence for Children International (DCI) welcomes the opportunity to speak in this dialogue on behalf of the NGO Panel for the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, comprised of 170 NGOs.

The NGO Panel commends the Special Representative for highlighting the numerous negative effects of violence on children's mental health, including when children are deprived of their liberty. Indeed, children in immigration detention face high levels of serious development delays, as well as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and self-harm. Whilst institutionalised children are more likely to display depressive symptoms and higher levels of behavioural and emotional problems.

The violence that children deprived of their liberty face including the negative consequences on their mental health can be prevented by avoiding depriving children of their liberty, providing alternatives to detention, family and community-based care, and diversions away from the justice system.

An increased awareness of deprivation of liberty of children around the world has enabled the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty to be carried out and presented to the UN General Assembly last year.

However, the NGO Panel for the Study remains concerned that children continue to be deprived of their liberty in many settings around the world despite the detrimental effects on their mental and physical health.

We call on Member States:

- to support the Global Study and implement its recommendations, as well as good practices on alternatives to detention,
- and furthermore, to ensure an effective follow up of the Study, including through a specific mechanism to continue data collection and implementation monitoring.

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This engagement is crucial for the success of the Study and its impact on the lives of millions of children deprived of their liberty all over the world.[1]

Madam Special Representative,

→ Given the high prevalence of children deprived of liberty de facto in institutions, between 3.5 and 5.5 million in 2018, what can be done to ensure that deprivation of liberty remains a measure of last resort and in accordance to the best interests of the child?

Thank you.

[1] According to the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, at least 1.5 million children per year are *de jure* deprived of liberty in the different settings (out of which between 430 000 and 680 000 in institutions) while the *de facto* annual number of children deprived of liberty exceeds 7 million (out of which between 3.5 and 5.5 in institutions). https://childrendeprivedofliberty.info/