



**Defence for Children International
XIIIth International General Assembly
10 and 11 November 2022
Nouakchott, Mauritania**

**DCI IGA XIII
DECLARATION**

Defence for Children International elects Khaled Quzmar as new President, and adopts new Strategic Framework for 2022-2026

The International General Assembly (IGA) of [Defence for Children International](#) (DCI), which is composed by National Sections and Associated Members in 30 countries, gathered at its Thirteenth Session in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on 10-11 November 2022.

On this occasion, the IGA elected a new President, Mr. Khaled Quzmar from DCI-Palestine, and a new International Executive Council (IEC) to lead the Movement from 2022 to 2026: President Mr. Khaled Quzmar (DCI-Palestine); Treasurer Ms. Mirjam Elisabeth Blaak (DCI-Netherlands); Mr. Ibrahim Simpore (DCI-Burkina Faso); Ms. Rouguiatou Diallo (DCI-Guinea); Ms. Margaret Tuite (DCI-Belgium); Ms. Manal Eid (DCI-Lebanon).

Khaled Quzmar has joined DCI-Palestine in 1995 as a lawyer representing Palestinian children in Israeli military courts. He was elected DCI Vice-President in 2017. He contributed to the development of the DCI Movement at the international level and in the MENA region, despite difficult circumstances, shrinking civil society space and armed conflict. Quzmar is the General Director of Defence for Children International-Palestine. He is a specialist in issues of justice for children and in grave violations against children during armed conflict. He earned an LL.M in International Human Rights Law from the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the National University of Ireland Galway.

Under his DCI presidency, the implementation of the [United Nations International Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) will continue to be at the heart of DCI's mission. The Movement played a key role in the drafting of the [UN Global study on children deprived of their liberty \(2019\)](#), and the recent [Global Forum on Justice for Children](#) designed a roadmap to promote the implementation of the Study's recommendations. This collaborative document involving all stakeholders (UN agencies, civil society, academics, practitioners, and governments...) will be officially launched in January 2023 and will be paving the road for implementation and promotion of the Global Study's recommendations in the coming two years (2023-2024).

The Assembly also adopted two resolutions submitted by DCI sections in MENA: a [resolution](#) submitted by DCI-Palestine, calling the Israeli government to immediately stop the aggression of Palestinian children, and to cancel their decision designating civil society organisations in Palestine as terrorist organisations. DCI-Yemen submitted a [resolution](#) calling for an end to the war, to cease selling arms to the parties in conflict, to guarantee access of the population to emergency support, so to allow Yemeni children to go back to school in a safe environment.

The International General Assembly granted full membership status to two provisional National Sections of Defence for Children International: DCI-Trinidad & Tobago, and DCI-Zambia. With these new National Sections, Defence for Children International is now strong of 29 National Sections and one Associated Member worldwide.

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The International General Assembly was also the opportunity for the Movement to meet in person to take stock of past achievements and challenges, whilst looking to the future on what is next for the movement. The world has changed dramatically since DCI's creation in 1979 and continues to do so at ever higher speed.

For the Movement to stay relevant and adjust its programmatic work, the IGA adopted a [new Strategic Framework 2022-2026](#) which sets out key actions to improve children's rights over the next 4 years. The Strategic Framework was the opportunity to reaffirm DCI's historic commitment to **justice for children** as the overarching priority governing DCI activities.

Gender equality and **child participation** had been adopted as cross cutting priorities during the previous Framework, and it was decided that these two areas would continue to be mainstreamed throughout the various activities outlined in the new Strategic Framework, as they still need to be prioritised in all actions, activities and operations.

The new Strategic Framework focuses on four priorities that will guide and support DCI National Sections in their efforts:

- **[Children deprived of liberty](#)** - DCI will strive to defend children's right to personal liberty and seek to radically reduce the number of children deprived of their liberty by promoting diversion, mediation and non-custodial measures. DCI will continue to co-chair the [NGO Panel on Children Deprived of Liberty](#) to ensure that this issue remains on the international agenda. DCI will also undertake to promote the implementation of the Roadmap for Action 2023-2024 on children deprived of liberty.
- **[Violence against children](#)** - DCI will continue to defend children's right to freedom from all forms of violence, help to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against children, and ensure survivors have access to justice, remedies, and recovery.
- **[Children on the move](#)** - DCI will aim to defend children on the move, who face variable challenges specific to their individual circumstances and their (perceived) status, to help ensure that they benefit from appropriate protection measures (including to protect them from institutional violence) and are empowered to claim their rights.
- **[Children affected by armed conflicts](#)** - DCI will defend children's rights not to be recruited or used in hostilities, and, where they are, to secure their rehabilitation and reintegration into society, especially with a view to being actors of change and peacebuilding during and after conflict.

Joint coordinated action remains DCI's collective core response to uphold the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), universal values, international law and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The development of the Strategic Framework has been the fruit of a comprehensive consultative process: each DCI region (Africa, Americas, Europe, MENA) designed their regional action plans focusing on concrete activities and deliverables that will be conducted at regional and national level. This allows each region to take into account the varying national contexts wherein they work and to identify the most appropriate actions to advance children's rights.

- **Africa** – Despite the fact that African countries have made significant progress in policy reforms, implementation of the policies has been limited due to weak institutions and upholding of socio-cultural practices and traditional norms that especially undermine principles of gender equality and child rights standards. In this regard, DCI-Africa will campaign for the legislative ban and abolition of traditional harmful practices such as Feminine Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. Institutional reforms that respond to the needs of children in accordance with strong child-friendly policies are crucial. Additionally, with the growing youth population across Africa, it's imperative to invest in education, prevention of violence and to fully engage youth in decision-making and development programmes as active partners and not just as passive beneficiaries. Three African sections (DCI-Sierra Leone, DCI-Liberia and DCI-Ghana) are working on the [She Leads](#) project, a

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five-year joint programme aimed at increasing influence of girls and young women on decision-making and transformative gender norms in formal and informal institutions.

- **Americas** – In addition to the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Americas, the region with the highest level of inequality in income distribution and the highest rate of violence in the world, has also experienced an increase in extreme poverty. Civil society organisations are confronted with shrinking democratic space, including the DCI Sections, and this leads to the decline of funding opportunities, drying up their financial resources, thus threatening their mere existence. To achieve the objectives of the Strategic Framework, DCI Americas will:
 - promote strategies with an environmental, gender and ethnic focus to address sexual violence, torture and physical punishment against children, so that states adopt measures to prevent and reverse these violations of the human rights of children.
 - Advocate for compliance with international standards on criminal justice for children and for the adaptation of national legislation, whilst prioritising restorative justice.
 - Strengthen spaces for the participation of children, so that their contributions are included in public policies.
 - Call on the United Nations agencies and international donors, to support DCI sections to help them get out of the difficult conditions they are living in.
- **Europe** -- The seven European National Sections plan a continued strong focus on justice for children, building on previous work and taking account of the European legal and policy framework. The [Child-Friendly Justice European Network \(CFJ-EN\)](#) will serve as an umbrella for a broad range of actions. Other actions cover all DCI strategic priorities, with a strong emphasis on capacity-building for the realisation of children's rights, notably for the child's right to freedom from all forms of violence and for children on the move. The effects of the war in Ukraine on children's rights will be monitored and, as far as possible, mitigated. Finally, given the challenges faced by civil society and human rights defenders, Europe places strong emphasis on cooperation with other DCI regions and also on governance, including diversification of funding and monitoring, evaluation and training.
- **MENA** – DCI MENA will work collectively to develop and implement core interventions through several integrated strategies. Those strategies will mainly include the [Socio-Legal Defence Centres \(SLDC\)](#), Monitoring and Advocacy, as well as empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders. The SLDC model goes beyond socio-legal support, it is a holistic approach that also produces evidence-based advocacy and ensures child agency. This model will be expanded to include all DCI MENA sections, while building on best practices and sharing of positive experiences. Through monitoring and advocacy, DCI MENA will collect evidence on child rights issues and implement advocacy actions to increase the accountability of duty bearers at regional level. On the other hand, to ensure meaningful child participation, the Region will equip children with knowledge and skills, to act as advocates for human rights and lobby duty bearers at regional level. Special focus will be given to gender equality and the promotion of girls' participation in decision-making processes.

[DCI's Strategic Framework](#) is a roadmap guiding the Movement's collective ambition for the 2022-2026 period to enhance access to justice for all children. Based on the Framework, DCI will strengthen its work and develop its capacity to advance and protect children's rights globally in close cooperation with its National Sections worldwide. In a context of climate change, armed conflict, increasing economic precariousness and threats to human and child rights defenders in a shrinking civil space, DCI's fight for a decent life in peace and justice for all children is more meaningful than ever.