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FOREWORD

2022 was an intense year of work and activity for our Movement, despite difficult circumstances worldwide. While the Movement’s strategic activities and in person meetings were severely restricted, children remained at the centre of our concerns, and much of DCI’s work could be maintained, sometimes in digital format.

The 13th DCI International General Assembly (IGA) was held in 2022 in Mauritania. The IGA adopted action plans for all DCI regions and a new Strategic Framework 2022-2026 which outlines Justice for Children as the overarching priority and breaks it down into four key thematic issues: Children deprived of liberty, Violence against children, Children on the move and Children affected by armed conflict. The Assembly also elected a new International Executive Council representing all regions.

The IGA was preceded by the Global Forum on Justice for Children and Deprivation of Liberty, following-up on the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Global Study exactly three years after its presentation. The Forum resulted in a Roadmap for Action to monitor progress through a collaborative, interstakeholder process, and to promote concerted action among all actors leading to the five-year evaluation.

In 2022, a former President of the Movement and Director of a DCI National Section, Benoit Van Keirsbilck, was elected member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. With Benoit joining other DCI colleagues who have been members of the Committee, DCI looks forward to the strengthening of this important treaty body and remains mobilised, more than ever, to ensure its effective implementation by member states.

Unfortunately, in 2022, we witnessed further shrinking of the civic space, with National Sections subjected to harassment by the authorities and even criminalisation of their work. Consequently, many sections suffer from scarcity of financial resources, thus jeopardising their ability to carry out their mission.

Despite the challenges, we continue to work with thousands of children around the world to enable them to enjoy their full rights. These children are actively participating in DCI as advocates for their own rights; they are capable of claiming their rights and should be involved in all matters that affect them. DCI has also continued strengthening its Child Safeguarding Policy that prevents harm to children and outlines measures to respond when safeguarding concerns arise, ensuring a safe space for meaningful child participation.

DCI would not have been able to reach its goals at the local, regional and international levels without the strenuous efforts made by the global Movement, especially the National Sections, the IEC, the Advisory Committee, its youth and child ambassadors, hundreds of volunteers, staff and supporting partners all over the world - sincere thanks to all those who contributed to the efforts of the DCI Movement using the best interests of the child as our common compass!
ACTORS FOR JUSTICE, ADVOCATES FOR RIGHTS

Defence for Children International (DCI) is a child rights focused and membership-based grassroots movement. Created during the International Year of the Child (1979), DCI coordinated the NGO input into the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history.

DCI acts to promote the individual and collective human rights of children at local, national, regional and international levels.

DCI’s vision is that children are a driving force for change. All children know and enjoy their rights in a just and responsible society, fully supported by adults. Children are listened to and involved in all decisions that affect them. Where there are risks of child rights violations, children are defended and empowered to claim their rights and to advocate for change. New law, policy and practice integrate child rights impact assessments. Respect for children’s rights translates into a more inclusive, just and equal society.

As an international movement, DCI is composed of some 30 National Sections — all of which have their own legal status and are guided by local child rights defenders who are committed to upholding the rights of the child through strategic action and effective empowerment of children. DCI National Sections are present across four continents and have an equal voice in the strategic actions the Movement leads.

They can consistently rely on the support of other DCI Sections, as well as relevant Regional Desks, the International Secretariat, strategically based in Geneva to engage with the UN Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review and Treaty Bodies mechanisms, and the World Service Foundation, located in Brussels, to connect the Movement with the European Union, international partners and access project opportunities within those fora.

“DCI, you have given us the courage to have confidence in ourselves, to go forward, you have shown us that we can go all the way.” Thomas
CHILD SAFEGUARDING

In November 2022, DCI began the process of updating its Child Safeguarding Policy and Principles adopted in 2020. The aim of this policy is to allocate clear responsibilities to National Sections and the International Secretariat, to ensure that DCI staff, DCI operations and programmes do no harm to children: they should not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and any concerns the organisation has about children's safety within the communities where they work, must be reported without delay to the appropriate authorities.

In response to the high prevalence of violence in the context of sports and leisure activities, DCI-Belgium implemented the For Recreational Activities in a Safe Environment (PARCS) project to raise awareness among concerned organisations, and to train them to implement child protection policies adapted to children's needs. Work is also done to accompany these changes with relevant legislation. A prevention campaign was launched with eight volunteer sports organisations. They were supported in implementing child protection measures through three actions: training on children's rights and how to protect them; publication of a practical guide on how to develop child safeguarding measures in sports and leisure organisations; and using the practical guide as a model to promote the adoption of child safeguarding measures in other sports and leisure organisations through social networks, videos and brochures.

During 2022, DCI-Italy supported the development and implementation of child safeguarding and wellbeing policies in the framework of the initiatives funded by the Con I Bambini foundation. It supported the Cooperativa Progetto Città in Savona and the Progetto Popolare Cooperativa Sociale in Matera in developing comprehensive child safeguarding policies for all its services.

In 2022, DCI-Costa Rica took the next step on their child safeguarding commitment by developing a Policy on Protection and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse that provides measures to prevent and mitigate risks and responds to sexual misconduct, putting the protection, rights and dignity of victims at the centre. Furthermore, DCI-Costa Rica developed child-friendly materials to work on the issue of prevention and identification of situations of sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers.
The 13th IGA gathered in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on 10-11 November 2022.

A new **Strategic Framework 2022-2026** setting out key objectives and actions to improve respect for children’s rights was adopted, reaffirming DCI’s historic commitment to **Justice for Children**. It entails promotion of justice in all its forms, that respects children’s rights and meets their needs, as well as the defence of children’s access to justice systems that guarantee their rights.

**Gender equality** and **meaningful child participation** will continue to be mainstreamed throughout all DCI activities. The new Strategic Framework focuses on four thematic priorities:

**Children deprived of liberty**: strive to defend children’s right to personal liberty and seek to radically reduce the number of children deprived of their liberty, by promoting the use of diversion, mediation and non-custodial measures.

**Violence against children**: defend children’s right to freedom from all forms of violence, and ensure survivors have access to justice, remedies, and recovery.

**Children on the move**: defend children on the move to ensure that they benefit from appropriate protection measures.

**Children affected by armed conflicts**: defend children’s rights not to be recruited or used in hostilities, and, if they are, to secure their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

In a context of climate change, armed conflict, increasing economic precariousness and threats to human and child rights defenders, DCI’s fight for all children to have a decent life in peace and justice is more meaningful than ever.
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Justice for Children

- Children Deprived of their Liberty
- Children on the Move
- Children and Armed Conflict
- Violence against Children
- Gender Equality
- Child Participation
DCI adopts a holistic approach to justice for children, by developing child protection systems, preventative and rehabilitation projects for child victims, witnesses of crimes, suspects or prosecuted, as well as supporting children as advocates for their rights.

DCI-Netherlands’ project *Waiting for it to pass? What do young people need after experiencing an offence that evokes shame or fear?* produced a report, based upon an online questionnaire, which exposes that children who become victims of an offence that evokes fear or shame, such as threats, assault, or unwanted sexting, often do not take action and wait for it to pass. If they do not seek professional help, they are not registered as child victims; their case remains unknown, and their problems remain invisible. The questionnaire was completed by 292 children in the Netherlands, aged between 12 and 18 years, with the following results:

- 64% of these children had been victims of a serious crime
- 73% of these children did not disclose or report for a long time.
- Only 18% sought professional help
- Only 11% reported to the police
- 66% indicated that they continue to be affected by the crime

The survey indicated that it is important for child victims to be listened to, and to be advised on possible actions to take.

The Child-Friendly Justice European Network

The *Child-Friendly Justice European Network (CFJ-EN)* was founded in 2019 by the European Sections of DCI. In 2022, thanks to the financial support of the European Commission, it was launched as a fully operational formal network. The Network consults children on the problems they face, enabling them to express their needs for more child-friendly justice and trains professionals in child-friendly procedures. It also collects and disseminates information on opportunities, challenges and practices on justice for children, whilst influencing policymakers to adopt legislation and policies that are sensitive to the rights of children in contact with the justice system.
SOCIO-LEGAL DEFENCE CENTRES (SLDCs)

Socio-Legal Defence Centres (SLDCs) provide child victims of violence and children in conflict with the law with the opportunity to effectively access justice and obtain remedies, in 12 National Sections. The SLDCs conduct inquiries, publish reports, pursue strategic court cases, and provide advocacy services by claiming the necessary changes to laws and policies.

Promoting a safe environment protecting the human rights of children and women victims of violence (funded by the EU):
DCI-Mauritania enhanced the activities at two new SLDCs in Nouadhibou and Hodh El Gharbi. By using referral pathways, the Section fostered cross-sectorial cooperation between the police, prosecutors and other duty bearers. In Nouakchott, 151 girls received socio-legal support in 2022.

The SLDC in Argentina, operating with the support of the city of Carouge, Switzerland, had 36 child beneficiaries.

The Regional MENA Project, supported by the canton of Geneva, Switzerland, provided socio-legal assistance to 91 children in Yemen, 211 children in Lebanon and 461 children in Palestine including 194 children in Israeli military courts.
CHILD PARTICIPATION

Rights-based, participatory decision-making with children in all domains and actions that affect them is one of the pillars of the DCI Movement. DCI considers that children can be the best advocates for their rights, and agents of change. Child participation consists in giving children a space, allowing them to express their voice to the appropriate audience and ensure that their views are given due weight, while also giving feedback to children about the extent of their influence.

Involving children meaningfully: the work of DCI’s National Sections

DCI-Ghana’s child participation efforts focused on actively involving Girls and Young Women (GYW) in the planning and implementation of project activities and being moderators in events such as international day celebrations, capacity building sessions or networking courses, which has positively influenced communities’ and societies’ perspectives towards GYW participation.

DCI-Costa Rica has been working on child participation with the publication of six booklets on participation rights, which have allowed DCI, the Minister for Children and Adolescents and UNICEF to promote the creation of national participation strategies.

DCI-Bolivia has improved child participation through their involvement in radio and
local TV channels, with the production of a weekly 30-minute news programme led by 20 children on issues like the protection of the environment, and the experience of living and facing problems in suburban areas.

**DCI-Belgium**, with the project **PREFACE**, aims to end so-called “mainstream educational violence” by working with children, parents, and school professionals, including participatory workshops in four primary schools.

**DCI-Italy** collaborated with the Children’s Rights Division of the Council of Europe with child consultations for the preparation of the new Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027). These child consultations involved 220 children from 10 EU Member States and led to the production of a report for the Council of Europe.

The **MENA regional desk** created a regional **Children’s Committee** with seven National Sections that involves children’s participation and engagement through monthly online meetings on topics such as community-building, education, and child protection.

**DCI-Yemen** with their project on Child Rights Governance supported the **Children’s Parliament** with the implementation of two advocacy campaigns: the separation of children from adults in places of detention, and the issue of climate change with the removal of plastic waste from the island of Socotra.

“I feel more informed as we can be exposed to these abusive situations in our community. Thanks to these meetings with DCI I have more information.” Zaira
GENDER EQUALITY

In many countries, girls still face tremendous obstacles in realising their fundamental rights. They experience multiple forms of discrimination and violence throughout their life, starting even before birth and continuing throughout childhood and adolescence, through to adulthood.

DCI strives to ensure equal rights and opportunities for girls and young women by changing social norms, policies and practices, while engaging boys and men in achieving gender equality.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a serious issue in Mauritania. Gender-based violence and marginalisation of young women and girls, especially from the Haratin community, goes hand-in-hand with the persistence of slavery. Attempts to pass a law on gender-based violence have been consistently jeopardised by the government. However, the government has set up a Commission to combat gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation, and an observatory to coordinate the work of NGOs engaged on those issues.

Through the project Strengthening the continuity of sexual, reproductive and child health care in the fight against all forms of gender-based violence, DCI-Mauritania provided medical and psychological care to 151 victims of GBV with the support of Doctors of the World.
The **She Leads** project is a five-year joint programme by DCI-ECPAT Netherlands, Plan International Netherlands, African Women’s Development and Communication Network, and Terre des hommes Netherlands, in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The programme empowers girls and young women to become leaders in their communities and countries by supporting girl-led groups and local partners in creating their own agenda and making their own decisions on advocacy and strategy. The 10 Guiding Principles of She Leads include Human Rights, Gender Equality and Social Justice. The DCI National Sections in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Lebanon, Palestine as well as the associate member in Jordan are actively involved in the She Leads project implementation.

In Ghana, She Leads was instrumental in pressuring the government to pass the Affirmative Action Bill. On 12 May 2022, the advocacy campaign culminated in a press conference held by the She Leads National Champions of Change calling for the passage of the bill. Following the campaign actions, the Speaker of Parliament in Ghana demanded the immediate submission of the Affirmative Action Bill to Parliament.
CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

The UN Global Study bridged the data gap on the unknown number of children deprived of liberty worldwide; this largely invisible group of children that according to the Study represents over 7 million children per year.

DCI-Palestine conducted 50 monitoring visits to Israeli prisons and police stations in addition to interviewing children after release. DCI-Palestine conducted 30 visits to Palestinian detention centres and met with children to monitor if they were subject to ill-treatment, torture, and fair trial violations. The main results of their monitoring activities were:

- 461 children were provided with legal representation
- 194 in the Israeli military courts
- 267 in conflict with Palestinian law
- 190 legal consultations for children before being interrogated by the Israeli authorities

Read the 2023 DCI-Palestine report: Arbitrary by default: No fair trial for Palestinian child prisoners

DCI-Belgium’s CADRE project promotes a better understanding of detention for migration-related reasons, possible alternatives, and human rights implications. It also aims at eliminating detention of children in the European Union. DCI-Belgium organised three transnational workshops that brought together more than 60 experts from the seven partner countries, followed by a series of online conferences as well as national trainings in five of the partner countries for lawyers, judges and professionals from civil society organisations. Four training modules and e-learning tools were also developed.

The scope of DCI-Italy’s CREW project is to achieve that all children involved in criminal proceedings have access to a child-friendly justice system that considers their individual needs and conditions to determine tailored measures aimed at their positive personal development within society. The main objectives of the project are to contribute to harmonising child justice practices in the 29 Italian judicial districts according to child-friendly justice principles, to systemise individual assessments through the development of a national methodology and to build the capacity of professionals involved in individual assessments.
GLOBAL FORUM ON JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY

Three years after the publication of the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, DCI, Terre des hommes (co-chairs of the NGO Panel on Children Deprived of Liberty) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children organised the Global Forum on Justice for Children and Deprivation of Liberty, in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on 8-9 November 2022.

It was an opportunity to take stock of achievements and obstacles and to define action for the coming years. The Forum’s discussions and analyses led to new recommendations on the pressing issues of justice for children and the deprivation of their liberty.

The discussions fed into a Roadmap to Action 2023-2024 to guide joint activities on justice and deprivation of liberty over the coming two years (2023-2024). The Roadmap identifies key recommendations from the Global Study that need to be implemented urgently, as well as initiatives and opportunities for stakeholders to work together.
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Violence against children is a serious problem that affects millions of children worldwide and takes many forms, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, and may involve neglect or deprivation.

The DCI Movement works to address violence against children in schools, homes, workplaces and the justice system. DCI has raised awareness and advocates for governments to act on the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children – the most comprehensive study revealing the scale of violence against children worldwide. DCI works closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (SRSG VAC), Dr. Najat Maalla M’jid, who acts as a bridge builder and a catalyst of actions in all regions and across sectors to accelerate progress towards the prevention and elimination of violence against children.

“My involvement with DCI led me to also want to start projects to help humanity, albeit with a grain of sand; they taught me that from small things you can make a change.” Laura

The story of Fama from Mauritania

Fama (15) was a victim of online child sexual abuse. After calling the helpline of DCI-Mauritania (1013) to ask for assistance, she was provided with psychological support for the trauma she was left with. The centre has a trained staff of social workers, lawyers, psychologists, facilitators and helpline counsellors for reporting. The centre works closely with the police, the gendarmerie, the courts and the child protection system. Furthermore with the legal support of DCI-Mauritania’s lawyers, Fama was able to have access to justice and the perpetrator was subsequently arrested and tried.
Defending children from all forms of violence

In **Costa Rica**, the *Arte y Parte* project provides adolescents with knowledge about the different forms of commercial sexual exploitation, analyses risk factors and informs them about relevant legislation and reporting mechanisms. 60 children were involved in raising awareness on social media, reaching more than 85,000 users. The project consisted in three phases, Training / Artistic Expression / Dissemination, which resulted in a Virtual Museum to inform about commercial sexual exploitation. DCI-Costa Rica implemented the project with the United Nations in Costa Rica, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as the Department of Political Affairs and Peace-building (DPPA).

In **Lebanon**, the *Incredible Me* project is a psychosocial support method of DCI accessible to all children experiencing post-traumatic stress. The module consists of creative physical activities (yoga & dance), mindfulness exercises, visualisations, songs, as well as fine arts that have the power to build children’s resilience. In 2022, the method was successfully digitised into a mobile application. Children were involved in developing monitoring and evaluation tools that consist of pre- and post-assessment questionnaires, child-friendly interviews and focus-group discussions.
Children on the move are often victims of violence in their country of origin, during the journey, but also in the country of arrival. How to identify and respond to this violence? How to prevent it? These are the questions that the project *Building Efforts for Children on the Move in Europe through Systemic Change, Facilitation & Expertise (Become Safe)* led by DCI National Sections in Belgium, Italy, Spain and Greece tries to answer. Some results of the project are: 615 professionals trained on how to respond to needs in the field, 637 children sensitised, and awareness-raising tools created by 15 committed young people who were given the support to consult children about their needs.

The *Monarca Project*, implemented by DCI-Costa Rica in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, contributes to the creation of conditions for children and adolescents in refugee situations to live in a safe place. Since 2019, this alliance has been consolidated by developing multiple actions with the aim of providing tools for the refugee population to fully integrate into their host communities. The four strategic axes of the project are case management, the promotion of the
right to participation, training and capacity building on the right to education, and advocacy to raise awareness of those institutions that are called upon to guarantee rights.

In September 2022, DCI-Netherlands organised a special day, the ‘I Stay Here’ Day, for about 30 children who are rooted in the Netherlands, but do not have a residence permit although they have been living in the country for more than five years. Afterwards, some of these children told DCI how much they had enjoyed this day full of activities which also provided them and their parents with legal advice via a Children’s Rights Helpdesk.

The Children’s Rights Helpdesk implemented by DCI-Greece has continued to be a focal point where children (unaccompanied or accompanied), families, and single parents receive free legal support, protection services, and information. In 2022 the Helpdesk supported 547 asylum seekers, with 80% of the children transferred to safe accommodation, and 80% of the asylum seekers who received a positive decision on their asylum and/or admissibility interviews.

DCI-Sierra Leone’s evidence-based advocacy for the project Ending cross-border child trafficking, has led to the transformation of their national Anti-Human Trafficking Act in 2022. The new Act now includes emerging issues regarding cross-border trafficking. This builds on achievements from 2018, when DCI-Sierra Leone, DCI-Guinea and DCI-Liberia facilitated the signing of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), that strengthen bilateral cooperation between frontline security officials, community leaders and civil society actors. Today, with the SOPs, DCI has succeeded in providing a template for frontline officials on how to effectively collaborate to address children on the move.
CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

The United Nations reports that there are around 250 million children living in conflict-affected nations. Despite the protection that should be afforded to them by international law, conflict places these children in situations of extreme vulnerability. DCI's National Sections have tackled the pressure of being in armed conflict areas with various projects, which have empowered local communities and engaged children to become advocates of their own rights.

DCI-Palestine, with their Accountability Programme, has monitored and documented 424 cases of violation against children, mainly due to Israeli occupation, 85 child injuries and 44 children being killed on the hands of the Israeli forces. The project was also aimed at exposing human rights violations through evidence-based advocacy, including sensitisation campaigns and the development of capacity building materials, like 35 public events, which reached more than 900 people.

DCI-Yemen’s Promoting Child Rights Governance project supported the Children’s Parliament carrying out advocacy activities on justice, climate change and the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The Parliament also conducted evaluations among its members about the impact of its activities on changing the behaviour of government institutions when dealing with children.
The story of Sadeen from Palestine

Sadeen (15) first learnt about DCI-Palestine’s child-led protection teams and the Children’s Council through an introductory session in 2022. Sadeen decided to become an active member of a protection team. She told DCI that since she became a part of the team, she has learnt a lot about her rights as a child, what are the violations and how to monitor and document them. After gaining enough knowledge and empowerment through the protection team, Sadeen became a member of the new Children’s Council, and later, she succeeded in becoming the vice-president. In her own words: “Prior to being a member of the children’s council, I have always had the feeling that we are unheard children, and that we cannot actually do anything for our rights; now I feel very empowered and eager to make the change along with my fellows.”

Children in War 2022 report

DCI’s Children in War 2022 report encourages states, civil society, UN agencies and all stakeholders to continue to advocate for the empowerment and meaningful participation of children, especially the ones in vulnerable contexts, and to recognise the positive impact made by them to advance peace-building and upholding human rights in their communities.

Substantially reshaping how the United Nations engages children and young people is an imperative. DCI recommends increasing child and youth participation in the inter-governmental spaces, as well as their continuous engagement and mobilisation, realising the potential of children within the UN system and enhancing accountability for war crimes and transparency in reporting.

Children who participated in the focused discussion groups for this study hope this report is the beginning of a more regular participatory process, recognising their meaningful participation as actors for justice and advocates for change.
**FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DCI Profit and Loss Accounts</th>
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<th>2021 (CHF)</th>
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</thead>
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<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
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<td><strong>EXPENDITURE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>RESULTS OF THE YEAR</strong></td>
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The audited financial statements reflect only the accounts of the International Secretariat based in Geneva under Swiss law. DCI National Sections have individual accounting and auditing systems according to their national legislation. The International Secretariat’s accounts comply with the Swiss Accounting and Reporting Recommendations (GAAP FER), including FER 21, and Swiss law. According to the DCI Statutes, the International Executive Council (IEC) approves the accounts for each year in between the International General Assemblies, which take place every four years. A copy of our full external auditors’ report, “Wuarin & Chatton S.A.”, can be found here: [English version](#) / [French version](#)
LOOKING FORWARD

Roadmap to Action 2023-2024

Youth Consultation Project in Sierra Leone

Build intergenerational partnerships between actors to inform policymaking to deliver SDG 16

Palestinian children deprived of their liberty

DCI to organise key discussion on Palestinian children deprived of their liberty at the UN Human Rights Council

New SLDCs in Morocco and Tunisia

Launch of regional activities in Morocco and Tunisia to fulfil the rights of all children in contact with justice

She Leads Programme

Girls and young women supported by DCI to engage with decision makers in Geneva on advancing gender equality

DCI continues global action to end child deprivation of liberty through a two-year Roadmap to Action
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Together we can support children to become actors for justice and advocates for their rights.

Cover page: Nermin, 16 years-old from Tunisia, laureate of the She Leads International Award / Backcover: PREFACE, DCI-Belgium