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# Declaration: For the Human Rights of Children

7 March 2017



*"Children are not the problem, children experience the problem"*

– Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize winner

and member of the first Advisory Committee

of Defence for Children International

Geneva, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017

The International General Assembly of Defence for Children International gathered in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1-3 March, to reaffirm and bolster its commitment to children and to ensure the promotion and protection of their rights, as embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), its Optional Protocols and other relevant human rights instruments.

The International General Assembly (IGA) took stock of the major challenges and issues facing the human rights of children and adolescents<sup>[1]</sup> over the next four years. While the challenges differed among regions and countries, a number of critical issues emerged that were common to the movement as a whole. The IGA stressed that its perspective on defending the human rights of children was underpinned by nearly 40 years of experience and benefited from the work of over 35 national sections across the globe.

## Global issues of concern

- The trends of diminishing commitment to ensuring the human rights of children by governments today, as exemplified inter alia by current initiatives that go against recognized standards and obligations on juvenile justice and child migration;
- The absence of effective national and international systems of accountability;
- The evidence that insufficient attention is given to preventative measures and the factors that lead to the violations of the human rights of children;
- Development aid, while essential and often a constraint, cannot substitute for strong policies and programmes in favour of children;
- The lack of qualitative and quantitative data on most issues that can be used as a basis for advocacy dealing with human rights of children.

## Thematic issues of concern

- Increasing evidence that attention in crisis situations is focused on immediate humanitarian issues as opposed to adopting a holistic, global approach to the human rights of children in crisis situations;
- Substantive gender equality remains a constant objective and a cross-cutting issue;
- National laws on the human rights of children are not fully implemented. Moreover, there is a tendency to review national laws and provisions affecting the human rights of children, such as lowering the minimal age of criminal responsibility.
- The scope of issues hindering the realization of the human rights of children is extensive. Defence for Children International has focused specifically on the growing dilemmas affecting justice for children, violence against children, children on the move and children in conflict situations, particularly taking into consideration the international, regional, national and local contexts.
- The imperative of organizations dealing with the human rights of children today to provide a vision and realistic prospects for the realization of the human rights of children in order to give them hope for their future and empower them to be fully fledged actors and agents of change in society.

## Responses and areas of commitment

Working together in a global movement, the members of Defence for Children International remain firmly committed to the vision and mandate of the movement as a whole.

Defence for Children International is convinced that transformative actions cannot be realized without the full and effective participation of children.

In addition, it particularly commits to:

- Fostering specific programmes on substantive gender equality and the empowerment of girls and adolescent women;
- Making optimal use of the CRC Committee's General Comments and Concluding Observations/recommendations and the provisions of the three Optional Protocols to the CRC;
- Ensuring effective participation in the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (GSCDL), particularly with a view to its potential role as a transformative tool and trigger for improvements in the defence and respect of the human rights of children;
- Coordinating action within the movement to:
  1. Share information and contribute to information platforms
  2. Enhance capability building

3. Strengthen initiatives on evidence-based advocacy
4. Renew and strengthen the concept and practice of children's participation
5. Advance initiatives for resource mobilisation
6. Strengthen the capacities of national sections
7. Create and promote alliances with key stakeholders at national, regional and international levels on specific issues
8. Formulate a strategic plan for the movement as a whole, and articulate it to regional and national contexts

### Key responsibilities

All members of Defence for Children International will devote efforts to address the four key priorities adopted by the IGA for the movement's work over the next four years, while keeping focus on selected aspects:

- Justice for children, including prevention, protection, rehabilitation and social integration
- Violence against children, including all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation, in particular in the various contexts where DCI intervenes
- Children on the move, including migrants, refugees and displaced children and other children affected by complex situations
- Children affected by conflict, including post-conflict and peace-building situations

The empowerment and participation of children, substantive gender equity and equality and deprivation of liberty remain cross cutting elements of the IGA's commitments for the period 2017 – 2021.

[1] Defence for Children International considers a child as any individual below the age of eighteen years, in accordance with article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, Defence for Children International pays particular attention to adolescents, particularly in line with the CRC Committee's General Comment n°20 on the rights of the child during adolescence, which was adopted in 2016. In this declaration, Defence for Children International will use the term "child(ren)" to represent all individuals under the age of eighteen, including adolescents.

## News



Colombia: more efforts needed to protect children affected by the conflict (/colombia-more-efforts-needed-to-protect-children-affected-by-the-conflict/)



Yemen crisis: concrete actions needed to hold human rights violators accountable (/yemen-crisis-concrete-actions-needed-to-hold-human-rights-violators-accountable/)



Italy : Refrain from adopting law 2284, abolishing Youth Courts and Youth Public Prosecutors (/italy-refrain-adopting-law-2284-abolishing-youth-courts-youth-public-prosecutors/)



Children in armed conflicts: more efforts needed for their protection (/children-armed-conflicts-efforts-needed-protection/)



States must step up to support the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (/states-must-step-support-global-study-children-deprived-liberty/)



DCI raises concern over budget cuts for children in Costa Rica (/dci-raises-concern-budget-cuts-children-costa-rica/)

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## Events

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