

# **CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM PRIOR TO THE TWENTY-SECOND PAN AMERICAN CHILD CONGRESS**

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia – 28 October 2019

In preparation for the 22nd Pan American Child Congress, the Department of International Affairs of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN) provided an opportunity for discussions among representatives of various civil society organizations from OAS Member States and the Global Movement for Children–Latin America and the Caribbean, so that they could share their experiences and views on the policies implemented by Member States regarding compliance with the Convention on Rights of the Child, focusing on the following three themes, as agreed by the Directing Council of the IIN:

- Towards putting an end to all forms of violence and exploitation (SDG Target 16.2)
- The challenges of child participation
- Strengthening national protection systems; progress, challenges and lessons learned

As representatives of civil society organizations meeting at the “Third Civil Society Forum prior to the 22nd Pan American Child Congress” convened by the IIN, in coordination with the Government of Colombia and with the support of the Department of International Affairs–Secretariat for External Relations of the OAS, and the Global Movement for Children in Latin America and the Caribbean, we submit this document containing the recommendations that we consider should be taken into account within the framework of the 22nd Pan American Congress.

## **Towards putting an end to all forms of violence and exploitation (SDG Target 16.2)**

1. That countries should submit their reports on their progress in meeting SDG Target 16.2.
2. Request countries to comply with all international conventions and treaties on Human Rights, with an emphasis on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
3. Build family strengthening programmes through promotion and training opportunities in order to safeguard the rights of children and adolescents.
4. Strengthen alternative foster care measures for children and adolescents, especially those younger than 3 years.
5. Prioritize poverty reduction by strengthening public policies that support families and reducing the inequality index.
6. Develop appropriate control and information systems to generate real indicators on the situation of children from early childhood through adolescence, including digital violence, and migrant children and adolescents.
7. Set up comprehensive care programmes to eradicate all forms of violence against children and adolescents throughout their life cycle.
8. Urge States to devise and adopt services and specialized care programmes for children and adolescents who are victims of sexual exploitation, in health, education, justice, and

protection.

9. Strengthen justice systems to strengthen the rights of children and adolescents, thus avoiding impunity.

10. Design inclusive and participatory public policies that include families, communities, civil society, educators, faith communities, community and ethnic leaders, etc.

11. Promote the prevention, treatment and eradication of all forms of violence against children and adolescents, including physical and humiliating punishment, ensuring their participation.

12. Establish transnational protection systems for children and adolescents in the context of mobility, as a means of coordination and synchronization between operators of protection systems (health, education and justice sectors) and human rights defenders, in order to safeguard the rights of children.

13. Promote cross-sectoral, multi-actor (including the private sector), and community coordination, as well as with the State, in order to generate actions in health, education, family strengthening and protection and to create and promote safe environments.

14. Allocate public investment resources for protection against violence, target 16.2, stop abuse, exploitation, trafficking, torture and all forms of violence against children.

15. Holistically address, on the basis of prevention, but also with a focus on teen pregnancies resulting from sexual violence occurring in their closest surroundings. The approach should include legal issues as well as health (physical and psychological), and must include the eradication of the normalization of such situations.

### **The challenges of child participation**

1. We urge States to guarantee children's right to participation, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. The role of the State, families, communities and the media is critical to open up participation spaces, which should be strengthened, avoiding the political exploitation of children and adolescents.

3. Promote awareness processes with adults to strengthen joint work with these children and adolescents, including parents, community, civil society and the State.

4. Ensure access for children and adolescents to information on the defence of their rights, in different areas and providing adequate tools for empowerment, ensuring that this information reaches all municipalities and communities. This information should be:

a. Accurate, scientific and comparable.

b. User friendly.

c. Provided by persons who are experts on the matter being addressed.

d. Based on the reality experienced by children and adolescents.

e. Based on the principle of non-discrimination.

5. Strengthen their capabilities against the risks posed by digital environments. There should be legislation to prevent and punish digital violence, with capacity for implementation.

6. Special protection should be provided by governments in times of crisis, emergencies, and states of emergency. These regulations must adapt to cultural contexts, respecting peaceful zones and areas where there are children and adolescents; and must include monitoring mechanisms for the enforcement of compliance with these laws.

7. Ensure investment to promote and empower child participation in public decision-making venues and facilitate peer replication processes.

### **Strengthening national protection systems; progress, challenges and lessons learned**

1. Ensure the existence of protection systems that will bring together all jointly responsible actors, with an emphasis on families and society in general, seeing children as the focus of that responsibility we have as States, families and societies to ensure their comprehensive protection. Protection systems must ensure the democratic and active participation of children and adolescents.

2. The actions undertaken by protection systems must be coordinated between the different sectors. Safeguarding rights must be comprehensive, without violating other rights in order to protect them.

3. Ensure the coordination of protection systems among local, municipal, and departmental areas.

4. Strengthen public policies that guarantee families' capabilities in protecting children and adolescents, including training for parents in the exercise of joint responsibility.

5. Ensure the existence of public policies for children and adolescents in alternative care (family and community contexts) through joint work between family, community, civil society, educators, faith communities, community and ethnic leaders, and the States at all levels, including adequate budgets and monitoring tools.

6. Ensure that protection systems take into account the violence that occurs against children and adolescents in different socialization areas.

7. Eliminate bureaucratic barriers to adoption, safeguarding the right of children and adolescents to family life.

8. Accelerate efforts so that protection systems can focus on prevention and protection on the basis of inter-agency and cross-sectoral action.

9. Protection systems must be addressed on the basis of the principle of non-discrimination.

10. The protection system must include special procedures, in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, aimed at victims of trafficking, smuggling, forced recruitment by guerrillas or by drug traffickers, organized crime or other illegal groups.

11. Ensure access to justice and the right of children and adolescents to be heard and taken into account in any judicial process to which they are party.

12. Adapt the coordination of the protection system to other systems of social protection for family and community support in safeguarding the rights of children and adolescents.

13. Protection systems must address the ethnic approach and the prevention of forced early marriages.