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To: United Nations Office of High Commissioner Human Rights

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RE: Questionnaire: Climate Change- Child Rights

**Questionnaire**

**"Climate change and the enjoyment of child rights"**

**Deadline 31 December 2016**

You are invited to provide inputs through the questionnaire, below, on the forthcoming report on "Climate change and e enjoyment of child rights".

Children are the most vulnerable group to be effected by climate change and yet their voices are rarely reflected in the policies on climate change that will ultimately have long term consequences on their lives and future generations.

With that in mind my comments to the following questions will always reflect Article 12 of the CRC.

**CRC**

***Article 12***

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

**Questions**

**1.Describe, in your view, the relationship between climate change and the enjoyment of the rights of the child, and any human rights obligations to mitigate and adapt to climate change that can be derived therefrom. Please also share any examples of how the realisation of the rights of the child can contribute to more effective climate action**.

Climate change is a global problem that not only threatens the environment, but health, access to water and sanitation, land, and food. Children are the most vulnerable, with children living in developing countries disproportionately affected by disease and hunger and starvation. Articles 4 and 6 of the CRC call on State parties to explicitly ensure the fundamental well-being of children within the context of their families when at all possible.

**Article 4 (Protection of rights):** Governments have a responsibility to take all available measures to

make sure children’s rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. When countries ratify the Convention,

they agree to review their laws relating to children. This involves assessing their social services, legal,

health and educational systems, as well as levels of funding for these services. Governments are then

obliged to take all necessary steps to ensure that the minimum standards set by the Convention in these

areas are being met. They must help families protect children’s rights and create an environment where

they can grow and reach their potential. In some instances, this may involve changing existing laws or

creating new ones. Such legislative changes are not imposed, but come about through the same process

by which any law is created or reformed within a country. Article 41 of the Convention points out the when

a country already has higher legal standards than those seen in the Convention, the higher standards

always prevail.

**Article 6 (Survival and development)**: Children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that

children survive and develop healthily.

When environments are destroyed through exposure to toxins, wars and devastations, disease, etc, the rights of the child are challenged. Such environments lead to a scarcity of resources which in turn lead to more disease, violence and isolationism which place generations of children and youth at risk for poor social, cultural, economic, political and developmental outcomes. Engaging child and youth in the conversation about climate change is critical in helping States to develop and address solutions to the problem within the context of the children’s own cultures, class, race, and gender. In addition, education is also key in tackling the problem. State parties should work together to develop a global curriculum that addresses climate change and its interconnection across local, national and international communities.

**2.Please share a summary of any relevant data as well as any related mechanisms to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the enjoyment of the rights of the child, especially the rights of children in particularly vulnerable situations.**

Below are several links to an issue on the *Future of Children* that can provide some guidance on the issues of climate change and how it affects the well-being of children through direct, indirect, and societal mechanisms. Within this periodical the authors address the science of climate change, the effect of temperature change on health, climate change and war and conflict, natural disasters and child well-being, pollution and child development, climate change and children in developing countries and finally weighing the costs and benefits of climate change for future generations. The issue ends with suggestions on how society can tackle this problem.

Akresh, R. (2016). Climate Change, Conflict, and Children. *Future of Children*, *26*(1), 51-71.

Currie, J., & Deschênes, O. (2016). Children and Climate Change: Introducing the Issue. *Future of Children*, *26*(1), 3-9.

Larr, A. S., & Neidell, M. (2016). Pollution and Climate Change. *Future of Children*, *26*(1), 93-113.

Oppenheimer, M., & Anttila-Hughes, J. K. (2016). The Science of Climate Change. *Future Of Children*, *26*(1), 11-30.

3. **The best interests of the child should be taken into consideration in all matters concerning the rights of the child, including environmental decision-making. Please describe existing commitments, legislation and other measures adopted by States and other duty-bearers, such as businesses, in climate change mitigation and adaption which are designed to protect the best interests of the child. In particular, please share information related to implementation of commitments to address climate change while simultaneously contributing to the realization of human rights and the rights of the child, the promotion of gender equality, and the protection of future generations. Please also note any relevant mechanisms for ensuring accountability for these commitments.**

Please see President Obama’s commitment to Climate change.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-record/climate>

National Academy of Science has also provided a number of resources to address these issues the key now is to implement the findings from the workshop.

Characterizing Risk in Climate Change Assessments: Proceedings of a Workshop (2016)

<http://nas-sites.org/americasclimatechoices/other-reports-on-climate-change/characterizing-risk-in-climate-change-assessments-proceedings-of-a-workshop-2016/>

It should be noted that although the Unites States has invested in addressing climate change the approaches do not directly reflect a rights based approach. AAAS has more recently reflected Climate Change from a Human Rights perspective but not a Child Rights perspective.

Science and Human Rights Coalition Meeting: Climate Change and Human Rights.

<https://www.aaas.org/event/science-and-human-rights-coalition-meeting-climate-change-and-human-rights>

**4. Please provide guidance on what further actions need to be taken to adequately integrate children’s rights within climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, practices and decisions. In particular, please describe actions needed to:**

a. Ensure the integration of children’s rights, including the rights to family, health, nutrition, education, participation, gender equality, water and sanitation, among others, in climate action;

b. Prevent violence or conflict as it affects children and is connected with social, economic and political stressors aggravated by climate change; and

c. Promote intergenerational equity.

As mentioned in an earlier question education is key in addressing this problem. Children as well as adults need to be educated in a user friendly, culturally appropriate and globally connected way about the effects of climate change on our shared world. Attention needs to be drawn not only to effects of greenhouse gases, but also to war, disease, food and water insecurity etc. on the lives individuals, communities, and nations. The link should also be made to peace and security. Scarce resources lead to violence and the breakdown of societies which in turn leads to a lack of peace and security across the world.

This is an intergenerational problem and children and youth need to be a part of the solution. The adults who are currently making these decisions are not necessarily taking into account the best interest of the child, but rather short term economic and political gains, which will have long term deleterious consequences of which they will not be the beneficiaries, but their children and grandchildren will be!

For example, mosquitos do not respect international borders and so the Zika virus spread effecting women of child bearing age and their offspring across countries. Children have been born with birth defects and we still have no vaccine to protect against the virus. This will cost not only the parents but the children long term suffering and money. Not dealing with such problems takes its toll on human and economic capital, locally, nationally and internationally. Again children and youth have a right to live in an environment where they cannot only survive but thrive. Their rights should be taken into account when we are dealing with climate change, particularly those living in developing countries who are at greater risk for contracting life threatening diseases.

**5. Please share any commitments and best practices for effectively engaging children or youth in climate-related decision-making processes and climate action, particularly those most impacted by climate change, and with consideration for young people of different ages, gender and social backgrounds. Please share any examples of how empowering children and youth has contributed to more effective climate action.**

One way of addressing this issue is getting the message out so that children can understand it and know they have a voice in solving the problem.

For example: Young Voices on Climate Change offers such a mechanism.

<http://www.youngvoicesonclimatechange.com/>

Girl Scouting also allows girls to raise their voices to address this issue.

<http://www.girlscoutsla.org/documents/climateconn_flier.pdf>

Sites for Children

Here are a few of the sites just for kids:

[www.globalwarmingkids.net/web\_sites/index.html](http://www.globalwarmingkids.net/web_sites/index.html)

[www.ecokids.ca](http://www.ecokids.ca)

[www.coolkidsforacoolclimate.com](http://www.coolkidsforacoolclimate.com)

These are just a few ways in which youth can participate in understanding and providing solutions to climate change. When children and youth are empowered they take action and make change.

Girl Scouts Meet with Pope Francis

<http://planetsave.com/2015/07/01/girl-scouts-meet-with-pope-francis/>

**6. Please provide any additional information you believe would be useful to understand efforts made and challenges confronting States and other duty-bearers in their efforts to protect the rights of the child from the impacts of climate change.**

It would be useful if states, business and other parties developed internships and fellowships that would allow youth to work and serve on boards within their organizations specifically to address how these organizations are addressing climate change. This would guarantee that the voices of youth would be heard and part of the decision making process. In addition, these voices would need to reflect, race, class and gender to ensure the needs of all youth were addressed.

In addition, an outside task force reflecting NGOs, civil society as well as other stakeholders should be established to hold State parties and other duty-bearers accountable for ensuring that the rights of the child and human rights are not neglected when addressing climate change particularly in response to global business practices and development.