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HUMAN RIGHTS
TREATY BODIES

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**Human Rights Council 52nd session
Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders**

UNICEF statement

Mister President,

This statement is delivered on behalf of UNICEF and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. We welcome this interactive dialogue and join the Special Rapporteur in celebrating the work of human rights defenders.

All over the world, children have been striving for the protection and realization of their rights and the rights of others, at both national and international levels, often at great personal risk. Their work has led to tangible legislative and policy reforms, including in areas such as environmental protection and child marriage.

We are concerned that children face disproportionate barriers in acting as human rights defenders, including because of social norms that challenge their agency and right to participate in public life.

Child human rights defenders may endure restricted access to information and to justice, discrimination, and violence, as well as threats by adults who disapprove of their activism, or disregard the special protections due to children. During the consultation ahead of the Committee on the Rights of the Child's Day of General Discussion on Child Human Rights Defenders in 2018, 70% of the children reported experiencing violence or abuse when acting as human rights defenders. Child human rights defenders are sometimes deliberately targeted as a way of deterring others and may be expelled from school or prevented from entering higher education resulting in life-long consequences.

We therefore call on States to fulfill their obligation to both support children acting as defenders and protect them as they exercise this right, as well as to implement the Special Rapporteur's recommendations.

We stand ready to support. Thank you.