

JOINT PUBLIC STATEMENT

Child Rights NGOs Welcome the Decision of the United Nations to Provide an International Remedy for Children

New York, Monday 19 December 2011

The international coalition of over 80 international and national NGOs coordinated by the NGO Group for the CRC, which has been actively campaigning for the establishment of a communications procedure for child rights since 2006, welcomes the adoption of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure for child rights violations at the UN General Assembly today.

With this new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a “communications” or complaint procedure, the international community has effectively put children’s rights on an equal footing with other human rights and recognised that children too had the right to appeal to an international mechanism, just like adults.

Now children who are victims of abuses and violations of their rights will be able to make a complaint to their committee of international experts, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee), if they have not been able to get legal remedies for these violations in their countries.

We celebrate today the historical step forward that has been made for the protection of children and their rights. This could not have been achieved without the persistent and tireless commitment and dedication of all actors involved.

We particularly acknowledge and thank the Core Group of States that has led the process and the large number of States, from all regions, who have supported the creation of this new Protocol. We also thank all involved for their constructive engagement and congratulate the Chair of the Working Group for his commitment to make this new instrument happen.

While the Protocol could have provided a more comprehensive protection to children, we note that it was the result of thorough discussion, co-operation and concession by all and we acknowledge that in addition to individual complaints, it allows other parties to submit information about grave or systematic violations to the Committee.

We remain dedicated to making sure that the Protocol is a practical reality for all children and we are committed to resume our campaigning work for its widespread ratification and effective use.

We call on all States to initiate national discussions and processes in view of ratification of the new Optional Protocol as soon as possible, and urge them to sign the new Optional Protocol at the official signing ceremony to be held in 2012 to demonstrate their commitment to the protection of child rights.

We invite all interested organisations to join our international ratification campaign for the new Optional Protocol.



Background note

A complaints or “communications” procedure allows individuals, groups or their representatives, claiming that their rights have been violated by a State that is a party to a Convention, to bring a communication before the relevant UN Committee, provided that the State has accepted the procedure and that the complainants have exhausted domestic remedies.

For more information, please contact Anita Goh at goh@childrightsnet.org

About the NGO Coalition and the campaign

(<http://www.childrightsnet.org/NGOGroup/childrightsissues/ComplaintsMechanism/>)

The NGO coalition represents over 80 international and national NGOs and is supported by over 1,260 petitioners. It is currently organised as a Working Group of the NGO Group for the CRC co-chaired by Sara Austin (World Vision) and Peter Newell (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children) and coordinated by Anita Goh (NGO Group for the CRC).

A Core Group of members have been guiding the campaign, they include: Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIEACP), International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Kindernothilfe, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF) and World Vision International.