First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children: Bogotá Call to Action

Bogotá, 7-8 November 2024

Each year more than half of the world's children experiences violence. Violence can have an adverse impact on healthy development and well-being, and disrupt efforts made by families, communities, and countries to improve their children's future. For some, the impact is fatal. For others, the emotional and physical pain and trauma can last a lifetime and pass through generations. It is the duty of every State to take measures to ensure every child is protected from all forms of violence, including physical, and mental and psychological violence. Violence against children undermines efforts to implement the 2030 agenda and hinders progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Violence against children can never be tolerated and demands effective legal, policy, institutional and operational responses, including efforts to fight intolerance and impunity in this regard. This recognition sets the stage for those responses. The magnitude of the problem, including its catastrophic health, social and economic impacts, and the emergence of proven solutions, together bestow an immediate imperative on all of us to finally end violence against children everywhere, in partnership with children and in their best interests.

We have gathered in Bogotá, Colombia for the First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children (7-8 November 2024), to advance our collective ambition to end violence against children. *We represent governments and other partners from around the world committed to this cause – reaffirming our shared effort to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including Goal Target 16.2, which seeks to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, and other relevant Sustainable Development Goals and Targets. We thank the Governments of Colombia and Sweden for convening this meeting, with the support of WHO, UNICEF, and the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.*

***We acknowledge the progress that has been made in strengthening international commitments to end violence against children**, such as the adoption in 1989 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which constitutes the standard in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, and its optional protocols; the endorsement by the United Nations General Assembly of the recommendations of the 2006 Report of the Independent Expert for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children; the adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its vision of a world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation; the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of a number of resolutions and norms pertaining to violence against children, most notably, Resolution 69/194 on UN Model Strategies and Practical measures on the Elimination of Violence Against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (2014); the series of United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council Resolutions relating to the Rights of the Child, most recently Resolution 78/187 (2023), and all other relevant resolutions, including the series of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict including Security Council Resolutions 2427 (2018) and 2601 (2021) on Children and armed conflict, the Safe Schools Declaration (2015); and the World Health Assembly resolution WHA74.17 (2021) on ending violence against children through health systems strengthening and multisectoral approaches. We also acknowledge the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in developing recommendations and authoritative guidance to protect children against all forms of violence, particularly through General comment No. 13 (2011) - The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, among others. The United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (2019); and the endorsement by the UN Statistical Commission of the International Classification on Violence against Children (2023) are also acknowledged.*

***We commend States that have implemented measures in line with international frameworks, laws, standards, and norms, and have promoted public policies and investments with the specific aim of preventing and addressing violence against children**. These include the establishment of collaborative multisectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination frameworks that are integrated into planning processes; the prohibition of all forms of violence against and among children online and offline, including corporal punishment and gender-based violence, in laws, policies, and practices; the implementation of systematic and disaggregated data collection, research and analysis on violence and related indicators based upon evidence and*

international standards such as the International Classification of Violence against Children; the strengthening of autonomous human rights bodies and mechanisms responsible for monitoring the conditions of children; the analysis of the costs of violence and the returns on investment for prevention efforts; the allocation of human, financial and technical resources towards implementation of national and subnational strategies, policies, action plans, projects and interventions; and the scale up of prevention programmes and response services for victims and survivors through the training of professionals and the general public and especially parents, legal guardians and other caregivers.

We remain deeply concerned, and moved to action, by the high prevalence of various forms of violence against children that persists everywhere, and the new forms of violence that constantly arise*. We are conscious of and committed to addressing the enormous and unacceptable human, social and economic impacts of failing to adequately protect children, including the perpetuation of intergenerational cycles of violence. Given its debilitating costs and consequences, violence against children constitutes a much greater barrier to peace, justice, development, and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda than is commonly understood. Achieving its elimination requires that we intensify our collective efforts to address its underlying risk factors, including poverty, economic, social and gender inequality, the lack of access to basic resources such as quality and inclusive education, health and social protection, climate change, discrimination, harmful cultural practices such as the idea that violence against children is acceptable, social instability, and strengthen protective factors for all children across the globe according to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

We therefore commit to:

Ensuring the rights of the child and children's wellbeing

1. Place the rights and well-being of the child, including the best interests of the child and the prevention of all forms of violence against children, and efficient detection of and response to cases that do occur, at the centre of national plans to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, keeping in mind that poverty, social, and gender inequalities, undermine the rights of the child. Given that the realization of SDG target 16.2 on ending

abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children both contributes to and is supported by multiple Sustainable Development Goals, and stressing the pivotal role that family members and communities can play in preventing violence against children and the importance of empowering them and improving their living conditions, it should be prioritised in the accelerated efforts to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national, regional, and international level, including efforts to reduce inequality, and in forthcoming intergovernmental processes.

Ensuring legal protection

2. Ensure comprehensive prohibition of all forms of violence against children, including their full protection in criminal law, and effective direct and indirect access to justice and reparations as appropriate for children. States should ensure the implementation of all relevant laws, and review and consider amending domestic legislation, policy, and practice to ensure compliance with their international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocols to which a State is Party, and other relevant international instruments and guidelines, such as the Paris Principles and commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups. Priorities must include the prevention, response and prohibition of all forms of violence, including gender-based violence, corporal punishment and implementation of adequate safeguards in all settings; the provision of safe and nurturing family environments, the prohibition and elimination of harmful practices, including those forms that disproportionately affect girls, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation and cutting; the worst forms of child labour; the recruitment and exploitation of children by criminal and armed groups; the updating of legislation to criminalize such recruitment, and prohibit abuse, exploitation and sexual offences against children including those that occur through or are amplified by the use of digital technologies; ensuring appropriate statute of limitation periods for sexual offences against children, including exploitation and establishing redress schemes for victims and survivors; ensuring adequate protection against violence in schools and police violence; the strengthening of the capacity of justice systems and law enforcement agencies to end impunity of all crimes against children, as well as domestic violence and psychological violence and to better serve and protect children who are victims or witnesses of crime and violence including domestic violence; and the embedding of child friendly and age-, disability-, and gender responsive

processes and procedures in the justice system for children in contact with the law, taking into account the particular challenges faced by girls and children with disabilities, and favoring diversion, restorative justice, and non-custodial measures in line with the Convention of the Rights of the Child and other relevant international instruments.

Investing in evidence-based approach

3. Invest in multi-sectoral collaboration, data collection, and evidence-based preventive approaches, such as those consistent with the *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for ending Violence against Children* framework. Specifically, we urge States to prioritise three breakthrough approaches that promise the broadest and most enduring impact: (i) Universal access to parent and caregiver support that prevents abuse and neglect while promoting safe, stable and nurturing relationships; (ii) Universal access to safe, inclusive, and enabling school and leisure environments free from violence and harassment, including in emergencies and protracted crises; and (iii) Response and support services that include universal access to adequate and quality health care as well as psychosocial and mental health services and are accessible to all children who need them.

To effectively implement these approaches, consideration must be given to creating safe environments for children and addressing harmful norms that perpetuate violence, and to increasing the allocation of financial resources, including through, inter alia, financial and technical assistance, the financing for development, the fulfillment of the official development assistance commitments, the North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, technology transfer and capacity building on mutually agreed terms, to the elimination of violence against children and update public policies to promote accountability mechanisms, including at national level.

Strengthening child protection systems

4. Urgently strengthen the capacity of child protection systems for all children, including those in situations where children are at high risk of or are experiencing violence and other significant threats to their well-being, including in contexts of insecurity marked by armed conflict, armed violence and crime and other humanitarian settings, with special attention to those in vulnerable situations and to vulnerable groups, such as, inter alia, children of Indigenous Peoples, children belonging to minorities, Afro-descendant

children, children from rural areas and local communities, migrant and displaced children, including refugees and asylum seekers children, children with disabilities, children without safe parent or caregiver support and children of low economic resources. Child protection systems should promote children's agency and be inclusive of and responsive to the needs of all children in such situations, without discrimination of any kind and regardless of their status. They should be supported through the mobilization of adequate resources and international funding to support states, particularly those hosting children fleeing conflicts and war, and underpinned by inclusive, immediately accessible and child-friendly reporting mechanisms; routines for actively detecting violence against children; evidence- based methods for assessments and interventions; a robust and well trained and regulated social service workforce; effective and accessible and child-friendly justice and legal protections; adequate social reintegration for children who have been recruited and used in armed conflict; integrated or cross-sectoral service delivery that minimizes secondary victimization and includes social welfare, justice, health, and education sectors, amongst others; and be coordinated with response and support services for gender-based violence, especially against girls and women.

Address online risks and those that occur through or are amplified by the use of technology

5. Integrate online risks that occur through or are amplified by the use of technology into violence prevention and response efforts. Update child protection policies and build specialist capacities to address all forms of violence against children that occur through or are amplified by the use of technology, including those linked to artificial intelligence, and ensure their integration into national violence prevention and response systems. Strengthen legislative frameworks to protect children from emerging risks in digital environments to enable more effective prosecution of cross-border crimes, and offences that take place online. Encourage government and non-government accountability, mechanisms for ensuring children's safety in digital spaces through legislative and regulatory measures, engaged and responsible business conduct and voluntary standards, and the provision of evidence-informed education and support for parents, legal guardians, caregivers, educators, and children themselves. Include protection mechanisms for children belonging to vulnerable groups or in vulnerable situations, children with disabilities, ethnic groups, migrant children, and children on the move, including

those who are at increased risk of being subjected to sexual exploitation, trafficking and smuggling through digital media platforms.

Secure strong collaboration

6. Secure strong collaborations with children, guardians, communities,, the state, national human rights institutions, civil society and social movements, that include victims and survivors, child- and youth-led organisations, ombudspersons for children, academia, sports, community and faith-based organizations, women's and girls' rights organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, and the private sector at the national, regional and international level; that ensure the compliance of the rights and that take into account the best interest of the child as a primary consideration, and that promote protective norms and challenge the harmful social and gender norms and practices that facilitate violence against children and disproportionately affect girls; that empower survivors to advise on legislation, policies, and programs through the establishment of survivor councils, and that actively empower children to exercise their rights, engage in the development of policies that affect them, and respect their views and give their views due weight in all aspects of prevention, response and monitoring of violence against children as appropriate, and that promote the strengthening of international cooperation, sharing best practices and capacity building in addressing violence against children, including cross-border violence against children.

Commit to international instruments

Call for the effective implementation of all relevant international and regional instruments to which a state is party and encourage their ratification by those countries that have not yet done so.

We invite the United Nations General Assembly to endorse this Call to Action. We also invite States committed to lead the global agenda to end violence against children to participate in the Pathfinder 2.0 initiative.