



## **On the Record for Children**

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### **From the AP Editorial Desk**

#### **US Compromise Proposal Puts EU on the Spot by Adam Frankel**

In an attempt to bridge the gap with the EU over the Convention on the Rights (CRC) of the Child, the United States has proposed language that refers to the CRC as the normative framework of the Action Plan but only for those nations that have ratified the Convention, according to sources close to the US delegation.

The language was presented to the EU Tuesday night and discussed Wednesday afternoon by EU delegations. One EU delegate said that the proposal had created some 'confusion.'

The US proposal is said to accept the idea of a human rights framework for the Action Plan which includes not just the CRC, but also other instruments, which the US has either ratified or hopes to ratify. These include Convention 182 of the ILO and the two optional protocols of the CRC on sexual exploitation and child soldiering.

Even if the two protocols prove to be unobjectionable to the US, their ratification by the Senate would not imply support for the CRC, because the US succeeded in getting language into them which effectively delinks them from the CRC. The US proposal, which has reportedly been suggested to the EU would not create any pressure on the US to ratify the CRC. The US is one of only two governments that have not ratified the CRC.

In one important respect the new American proposal is considered an advance because its tone is more conciliatory than the extremely tough American intervention at the last PrepCom. The US is not trying to weaken the Outcome document, but wants to be seen as a constructive participant at the PrepCom, say sources close to the delegation.

Reflecting this new tone, a statement released on Tuesday by Michael Southwick, head of the US delegation, appealed to the 'spirit of respect for differences' at the PrepCom.

'We respect the fact that for many countries, the CROC serves as [the basis of future actions for children],' according to the statement. 'However, we have chosen a different approach; one that has also led us to make significant progress toward achieving the World Summit goals for children.'

If the proposal is accepted, it will disappoint many NGOs, according to Michelle Poulton, acting President of the NGO Committee on UNICEF. Some will feel that by allowing the US an escape clause, the proposal will weaken the Convention.

'It would mean that one of the major players in the whole process [of implementing the Action Plan as part of the Convention] is, in a way, out of the process,' said Poulton. 'It goes against the work of trying to advocate for one hundred percent ratification of the convention.'

Many would also be concerned that the US was once again making clear its opposition to the Convention; and also having this legitimized by the international community.

The proposed compromise is now very much up for grabs. One question is whether the EU and US can agree. One delegate from a neutral country said this might be difficult. In his view, the dispute over the CRC is part of a larger tension between the US and EU.

The other question is which side can win the support of other delegations. At least one moderate delegation thought the language might be acceptable.

The EU has repeatedly insisted on the original text, which refers to the CRC as 'the normative framework' of the Action Plan regardless, whether signatories have ratified the Convention or not.

The US has said that it 'would not accept language' in the Outcome document that refers to the CRC as the 'normative framework' for the Action Plan. Since the US is not a State Party to the Convention, it would be inappropriate for all future actions to be linked to the CRC, according to sources close to the US delegation.

NGOs have been pushing governments to view the Outcome document as part of a larger implementation plan of the CRC, and the third revised outcome document comes closer to achieving this than the previous draft, said Bill Bell of the Child Rights Caucus.

### **Girls Lose Out in the Outcome Document** **by Sara Friedman**

'Do we have to go through this all over again,' asked Jackie Shapiro co-Chair of the NGO Working Group on Girls. What she is referring to is the 'grossly inadequate' mention of girls in the Outcome document.

This is a distressing backslide from the Beijing Platform for Action and Article 2 of the CRC which single out the special vulnerability of girls to many violations of their rights in areas such as health, education, violence, economic and sexual exploitation. Ms. Shapiro notes the absence of any mention of girls' rights throughout the document and points to several glaring examples.

The Secretary General's Report points out that girls and young women constitute 2/3 of the 10 million young people affected by HIV/AIDs. There is no mention of this in the Outcome document.

Harmful traditional practices, such as fetal sex selection, infanticide and genital mutilation clearly affect girls disproportionately. Yet the language of the Document says, 'children and women.'

And yesterday, Ms. Shapiro noted with incredulity, 'the one place where there was NO dispute about girls, the dangers of pregnancy complications, was threatened with deletion'. The language currently reads: 'complications related to pregnancy and childbirth kill more than half a million women and adolescent 'girls' a year.' Iran urged removal of the word, 'girls' so it would now read: pregnancy and childbirth kill women and 'adolescents'.

Acknowledging that governments are the collective author of the document, Ms. Shapiro expressed disappointment that UNICEF is unable to assert more influence to reinforce and build on its leadership role and unrelenting support for girls over the past decade.

### **'You Cannot Get Your Way Without Fighting For It'**

**Carol Bellamy** speaks to **Vadim Pungulescu**, a young reporter from On the Record

I learned yesterday that persistence pays off. After tracking Carol Bellamy for nine hours, I got a few minutes of face time with the UNICEF Executive Director after the second informal session.

As a youth participant at the third PrepCom, I felt it was important to get her views on the value of youth participation.

**Q:** How do you feel about youth participation in this PrepCom?

**A:** I am glad that young people are here, and I think there should be more of them, and not only in the PrepComs but also in the Special Session. The problem is that space due to security is limited, and we cannot do all that we want, unfortunately. I hope for more in the future, but the strict UN regulations make it difficult to have young people here in the first place, and it is almost impossible on the large scale of regular UN meetings.

**Q:** Who do you think will have their say in the Outcome Document? Young people's amendments or the governments' reluctant ideas?

**A:** Let's make this clear. The Outcome Document is a government's document. There are ways for children to influence their governments, like lobbying and trying to convince their delegates, but I do not think it's enough just to come with amendments. The young people have to convince their delegates that they need to include [their amendment] in the document. Lobbying is always a good way of getting your ideas through. You cannot get your way without fighting for it.

**Q:** We hear that every government will have only two representatives at the Special Session and that young people may not be represented at all. What's your comment on this?

**A:** Delegations can be bigger or smaller. They can have some young people, a lot of young people or none. It's up to the governments to decide their delegates. However, my hope is that as many young people will be involved, according to possibilities.

**Q:** What's your stand on including young people in the governments' delegations?

**A:** I strongly support it. The more, the better.

**Q:** What would you like to say to the young people present here? Do you have a message for them?

**A:** I think that they should be honest, they should be themselves, they should try to convey their problems, to offer their ideas as solutions. They should make the best of [the PrepCom].

### **Viewpoint: The Meaning of Participation**

John is one of the reporters who works on this paper. He gets up at six o'clock every morning and spends ninety minutes in the New York rush hour in order to make the 8:30 am editorial meeting. He believes that this PrepCom is worth the effort.

John finds it as difficult to get a story as everyone else on the team. Sometimes his contacts fail to show up. Sometimes the security guards close the door on him without any explanation. He looks around the sea of faces and wonders how he will ever get a story. But he makes it in the

end and he never misses a deadline. When he heads off home at the end of the day he can be satisfied with a job well done.

John is thirteen years old. Most of those now writing for On the Record are under 18 years of age. At one stage on Tuesday there were a dozen young writers working in the On the Record office. Was it chaotic? Of course. But it was chaos with a purpose.

On the Record benefits from the involvement of John, Nazli, and our other young reporters. For example, we got the sort of perspective from John on child soldiers on Tuesday that adults rarely look for. How can young child soldiers of Sierra Leone be so brutalised as to cut off the hands of their victims? Of course they are forced into it by adults. But there is also an appeal in being part of the gang - a sense of camaraderie. It took another young man to hone in on this essential point.

Do we put up with lower quality by having John and Nazli on the team of On the Record? Not at all. They may find it hard to see the elusive 'peg' in a story, but they also have a marvelous capacity to focus that adults would die for. They can be brilliant communicators - which is what journalism is all about. John and Nazli bring other intangibles to the job. They handle pressure well. They listen and learn. They don't pursue their own personal agenda.

In fact, we long ago forgot that John is half our size. He and Nazli have become essential members of the editorial team. Their participation is making this a better product. It is in everyone's interest.

We find it surprising and alarming that the participation of children is one of the most controversial issues before the Special Session. Some so-called 'pro-family' groups appear to view the participation of children as a threat to the family. Several Islamic governments appear to agree with them. They feel that the participation of children undermines the authority of parents and erodes 'family values.'

This could not be further from the truth. We cannot speak for John's family, and we certainly regret that his Mum has to get up early to drive him in, but we can see John growing visibly in confidence before our eyes. He feels good about himself - and that will surely benefit his family.

In a sense the challenge of child development is all about participation. Poverty, as we now know, is a product of discrimination - of being denied access to essential resources. Children are among the first casualties of poverty because they have no access. They have no access because they have no voice. 'Participation' can save their lives.

Think how they already participate. They fight in wars and get forced into the sex trade. They work in stone quarries and carpet factories. Orphaned at an early age, they are forced to support aging grandparents and younger siblings. Adults have imposed a world of woe on these children and forced them to participate in the worst possible way. It is hypocrisy to deny them the chance to participate on their own terms. Not only is this in the best interest of children - in the age of AIDS, it could save their life.

To a greater or lesser degree, everyone involved in this PrepCom is now wrestling with the issue of child participation. It is not easy. NGOs tried it last time around, but without success. They offered children the chance to participate at the PrepCom by helping them create a caucus which then fell apart, leaving bad feelings.

This time, the NGOs are doing it better. UNICEF is also more engaged. Together, they have made it possible for the under-18s to have their own space and conduct their own discussions, without imposing an adult agenda. From what we can gather, they are finding the right balance.

All over this PrepCom, we see growing signs of participation by children. On the Record ran a story yesterday about a delegation of students that wants the Outcome draft amended to provide better support for disabled and disadvantaged parents. These college delegates are worried that governments might be tempted to take children away from parents with such difficulties. Young people are urging governments to keep families together. It is hard to find a better example of family-friendly participation by children.

If this continues the Special Session might yet distinguish itself. The draft document is a vapid and uninspired text, but if the Special Session can grasp the nettle and open the way to real participation, it could turn into a milestone of sorts.

The signals are mixed. We hear that many governments are apprehensive. We understand that they might not want to have children standing up in the glare of publicity, complaining about child abuse. But, we think they need to hear such things. We applaud the 15 governments that have included children in their delegations - and we hope they are given some real authority.

As for those powerful governments who appear to fear the participation of children - we thought you had more confidence.

Take if from this newspaper - you will be richer, and more informed, if you listen to kids.

### **Letter to the Editor:**

Dear Editor:

Thank you for drawing attention to poverty and disparity (Friedman, June 12) as the biggest challenge we face in helping children. Given the evidence presented by the Secretary General's report, it is disappointing that the Draft Outcome Document weakens the commitment to development assistance instead of living up to past commitments.

Paragraph 47 suggests that the long-standing target of .7 percent of GNP for development assistance now apply to all assistance, not just assistance for poor countries, and it suggests a new target of .15 percent to .2 percent for assistance to least developed countries.

Donor countries would be less embarrassed by their stingy aid policies because they could include money sent to middle-income countries to meet their obligations. The official record

would improve overnight, but the reality for poor children would not change. Children most in need will continue to be neglected.

We hear lots of rhetoric from political leaders about caring for children. What they do with paragraph 47 on development assistance will be a genuine test of their commitment to build a better future for children.

- Kathy Vandergrift, World Vision -

### **Algeria and Pakistan Oppose Participation of Children at Special Session Panels by Jeremy Weissman**

Algeria and Pakistan raised opposition yesterday to a proposal that would guarantee the participation of children on three roundtable panels at the Special Session in September.

The objections were made at an informal closed meeting of governments that took place in the Trusteeship Council over lunch on Wednesday. The meeting was chaired by the German Ambassador Schumacher.

NGOs have been waiting expectantly to see if governments will allow children to make a serious contribution to the Special Session. During informal discussions last month, Canada, the EU and the Rio group proposed a formula that would allow six children from around the world to participate in three panel discussions, each of which would be directed by two heads of state.

According to the proposal the chairpersons 'shall choose two child delegates, taking into account equitable gender and geographic representation.' for each of the three panels.

Delegates had reportedly not had a chance to discuss this formula until Wednesday. But many assumed it would be accepted without much controversy until Algeria opened the debate.

Pakistan then proposed that young delegates from civil society should be barred from participating in the three round tables. The Pakistani delegate later suggested that it would oppose the participation of any young delegates whatsoever.

The Algerian and Pakistani delegates both complained that they had not received copies of the amended draft resolution prior to the meeting. Other delegates clearly found this very difficult to believe.

Algeria also asked to remove a preambulatory clause recalling paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 55/26, which encouraged states to facilitate the contribution of young people to the Special Session.

Several delegates expressed willingness to strike the preambulatory clause as long as the amendment on child participation was preserved. The meeting broke up without a decision.

Delegates appeared to assume from this discussion that Pakistan is opposed to the participation of children at the Special Session. They are less clear about Algeria. But even if the government of Algeria does permit children it appears reluctant to allow them to write their own statements. When the Algerian delegate asked who would write the children's statements she drew a rebuke from Ambassador Hanns Schumacher.

The United States expressed support for the participation of children at the Special Session but emphasized the need for a 'neutral, non-politicized' selection process for the child panelists.

### **Language on Reproductive Health Care Alarms Pro Life and Pro Choice Advocates by On the Record Staff**

Prochoice and prolife groups have both expressed alarm at compromise wording in the Outcome document that seeks to promote gender equality and equal access to sexual and reproductive health services.

The compromise wording was included after a controversial comment from a Canadian delegate late on Tuesday night at which he acknowledged that such services could include abortion.

This comment provoked an immediate storm and led the delegation of the Holy See to propose wording that was eventually agreed by consensus.

The wording, in paragraph 21, now reads: 'We will promote gender equality and equal access to basic social services, such as education, nutrition, health care, including sexual and reproductive health care, vaccinations, and protection from killer diseases...'

Prochoice groups expressed concern that this would weaken the language of the Cairo and Beijing conferences, which clearly established that reproductive health care is essential for the all-round survival and wellbeing of women and girls.

By qualifying such services as 'basic' and 'social', they said, the Outcome document takes these services away from reproductive health and pushes them back towards basic health care such as the provision of water and nutrition. Many also fear that this would make it more difficult for women to have access to contraception, and even abortion where it is legal.

Prolife groups expressed concern for exactly the opposite reason - that the new language would legitimize the use of abortion. In a written statement that was circulated in the conference halls, Austin Ruse, the President of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-Fam) warned that 'the phrase 'reproductive health care' may be interpreted to include abortion.'

When repeated again and again, he wrote, this will eventually become international customary law.

The response to the Canadian proposal clearly astonished the Canadians themselves, who spent most of Wednesday explaining that the remark had been let slip late at night when their delegate was tired.



The Canadians also explained that they were trying to ensure that no obstacles are placed in the way of women and girls obtaining the full range of reproductive health care.

While not wanting to reignite the firestorm, Canadian delegates privately accepted that this may include abortion in countries where abortion is legal. They pointed out that legal abortion is widely viewed as one of the ways of preventing women from dying of botched back-street abortions.

At the same time, they said, Canada was certainly not suggesting that abortion be included in the draft, or implying that the draft somehow legitimizes the practice - as Mr Ruse seems to be suggesting. They also insisted that the new language will not turn the clock back on Beijing and Cairo.

### **Late Agreement Rescues Islamic Group After Divisive Debate by Rachel Watson**

After a week of divisive arguments between conservative and moderate factions, Middle East and North Africa NGO delegates finally reached agreement Wednesday evening on a regional statement for the Outcome document.

In a broad statement, the group largely avoided controversial issues, and concentrated on the protection of children affected by foreign occupation and economic sanctions. Both issues have unanimous support from Arab NGOs.

At the same time, the statement also tried to reflect divergent views on child rights and the family. 'Child rights will be a goal but not a way to reach that goal,' an unofficial translation of the statement said. '[the document] will encourage governments to have the responsibility to guarantee child rights and youth rights, and they will support the role of the family in society in raising children and inherited traditions.'

Both sides welcomed the statement, although one moderate delegate said that it was so general that it merely disguised the problems remaining within the group.

The split had emerged between radical Islamic groups and more secular NGOs over whether the document should be rights-based or whether it should be framed within the context of family and religious responsibilities. Reproductive health and gender equality were particularly difficult.

A detailed paragraph-by-paragraph review is still under way. Arab NGOs were hoping to submit the statement Wednesday night in the hope of being able to make an oral intervention in Thursday's plenary session.

'This is important because the Islamic countries have been accused of delaying the process,' said Essam Ali, a delegate from Egypt. 'The image is that the NGOs in the Middle East can't reach a consensus.'

Divisions flared in caucus meetings this week, which were frequently interrupted by procedural complaints and heated individual exchanges. One representative stormed out of Wednesday's caucus, protesting what he said was the presence of government officials at an NGO forum.

Many delegates were critical of the chairman, Dr Ali Ganim Al-Hajeri of Qatar, for his inability to control the meetings and suggested that the delay in reaching a compromise on the document had been caused by time-wasting discussions on rules and regulations.

'I would put the blame on how we run our meetings but not on how we think,' said Mohammed Abu-Harthieh, from the Palestinian NGO Al-Haq. 'There should have been rules of procedures, we need to show respect for speakers.'

Islamic groups meanwhile were upset by what they saw as Western-oriented views influencing the more moderate members. 'We disagreed on the notion of equality,' said Dr Saddeka Arebi of the International Islamic Committee for Women and Children. 'In Islam there is a balance between rights and responsibilities. We maintain that when you are addressing children's problems in no way can you separate the children from their family.'

Secular and more liberal delegates insisted that child rights were already enshrined in international conventions. The notion of responsibility should be left to national legislation, they said.

'For our side we believe that the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be the framework and the reference for the document and not the Islamic religion or any other religion,' said George Abu Al-Zulof from the Defence for Children International Palestine section.

A grouping of 11 Islamic NGOs have already presented governments with their revisions to the second and third drafts of the outcome document. The revisions include the removal of all references to gender equality, including the deletion of articles 21 and 22 which refer to reproductive health rights and the role of men in society.

In the view of the Islamic groups these articles 'reflect a radical feminist attitude and clear gender perspective that are unacceptable to many cultures and religions.'

### **Major Victory for Children's Right To Play by Ingrid Carlson**

The addition of a child's right to play and sport into the Outcome document is a major victory for all children worldwide, according to Johann Koss, Chairman of Olympic Aid International.

The language, which will be found under the 'Education' section of the Document, provides for accessible recreation and sports opportunities and facilities at schools and in communities.

According to Mr. Koss, a four-time Olympic Gold medalist speed-skater, sports are as important to raising children as the basic needs of food, shelter, and protection. 'Play is instrumental for a child's development. Children learn through play,' he said.

Olympic Aid International is an NGO that sends coaches to refugee camps and villages in Africa and Southeast Asia to implement sustainable community sports programs.

The organization believes that sport works on five levels of a child's development: mind, body, spirit, health, and peace. Youth gain concentration, creativity, an increased awareness of their bodies, and aptitude in communication, in addition to leadership and conflict resolution skills. In one example, research has suggested a striking correlation between organized sports and a reduction of teenage pregnancies.

Ann Peel, Executive Director of Olympic Aid, pointed out the problems of compartmentalizing children's development. 'You can't isolate [children's] needs,' she said, but must integrate their physical, mental, and socio-emotional needs into a cohesive program; 'you waste your money if you don't.'

Waneek Horn-Miller, a Mohawk on the 2000 Canadian Olympic Women's Water Polo Team, knows firsthand the importance of sport to under-represented youth. 'Indigenous youth don't have the same access to sports programs, and this directly links to problems [within the communities].'

But accessibility requires knowledge, implementation, and access to facilities, equipment, and staff. Many countries most in need of sports programs are also those that have the least access to these resources. Olympic Aid has grown from a fundraising concept into one that provides developing communities with these physical resources through its Coach2Coach program.

### **Guatemala Through Olandina's Eyes by Mark Lent**

Acting as the youth representative for Guatemala, Olandina Lopez, a 15-year-old from the San Juan Ostuncalco region, has come to voice the concerns and hopes of all her country's children.

Her natural leadership skills, honed by her work as a child leader in her community, were noticed by local NGOs and community groups, who brought her to New York to act as a delegate on behalf of indigenous children. One of her main desires is to make sure that the needs of native populations are taken into account before the final outcome document is completed.

Problems that her community has faced with rape, discrimination, and lack of education are what have fueled her flame and inspired her to fight for increased rights of the people living in the rural parts of her country.

The incidence of rape and discrimination can be linked directly to this lack of education, states Olandina. In a nation where only 35 percent of children receive secondary schooling, and where the majority of the population is illiterate, this problem is one that faces a majority of her people. Olandina is fighting for an accessible education system, whereby schools should be free and offer an easier form of obtaining school supplies.

This child must be heard and her words responded to. This is one right that must be made a reality.

**STOP! An Exclusive Interview with Jennifer Jadwero, Founder of 'Stop Rape'  
by Yvonne Maingey and Shani Hatch**

Violence and rape must cease, says 14 year old Jennifer Jadwero, and it must begin with education.

As the founder of the 'Stop Rape' clubs, Jennifer helps educate and spread her message of zero-tolerance to children worldwide. Her fight took shape this past February, when she introduced her plan at a conference to stop violence against women. She has since started clubs not only in her own school, but worldwide.

While rape is often seen as a gender-specific topic, the majority of the members in her Kenya clubs are boys. In fact, it is more often the boys than the girls that see the importance of participating in this campaign.

Her mission started in 1997, when her grandmother was fatally stabbed by her grandfather. Since then she has felt the need to educate others on issues that relate to rape and violence, including gender inequality.

Jennifer's vision sees a future where violence against women and children is eradicated through education and communication. 'If one child is told, and that child tells another child, the message can be spread rapidly', comments Jennifer. Like a pebble tossed into a pond, the ripples can have far-reaching effects. By educating children on it, they are empowered to help find the solution.

**EPA Hogs Caucus  
by Yelena Ovcharenko, Katarzyna Ciekowska, Richard Sierotnik**

The Outcome document is not adequately addressing the health needs of infant children, according to the NGO attendees at Tuesday's Environment and Health Caucus.

According to the NGOs, there is no language in the current version of the Document talking about protecting children from toxins in their environment. Intake of these poisonous substances by young children leads to many diseases, including asthma and allergies.

Participants also pointed out the impact of these contaminants on breast milk. Chemicals produced by factories and released into the environment, are entering mothers' bodies, causing defects and malnutrition in their children.

However, a large focus of the meeting was neither environment nor health, but the United States' overwhelming domination of the discussions. The US Environmental Protection Agency spent an inappropriately long amount of time presenting on issues solely related to the United States, and only had material concerning the US interests.

In response to questions regarding whether the EPA could help acquire this type of information for citizens of other countries, the EPA responded 'go and ask your government.'

### **Les Participants Francophones et Hispanophones Revoltes Par la Domination de la Langue Anglaise de Hachem Wachem/Tunisie**

La domination incommensurable de la langue anglaise pendant toutes les activités du PrepCom a suscité un grand mécontentement chez les participants francophones et hispanophones.

Cette domination semble très claire si on observe les documents: La majorité des documents disponibles ne le sont qu'en langue anglaise. D'autre part, il faut souligner la difficulté qu'ont les participants non-anglophones à suivre les activités et à se sentir sur un même pied d'égalité que les autres participants.

'Comment pouvons-nous participer si nous ne pouvons pas comprendre?' a remarqué Fransisca Dagan.

'La différence entre les langages ralentit la compréhension de ce que nous voulons dire c'est pour ça qu'on doit patienter pour que toutes les idées soient clairement comprises par tout le monde,' Nicole Bidegain d'Uruguay a dit.

Le problème a incité l'intention des responsables au HENRY LABOUISSSE HALL qui mettent des interprètes à la disposition des intéressés mais ceci n'a pas été suffisant et le problème a persisté entraînant une difficulté de communication parmi les jeunes participants.

Aussi, des mesures actives doivent être prises. Et ce que les jeunes participants aient accès à une salle suffisamment équipée afin d'avoir une traduction instantanée et personnalisée.

Ce qui est claire c'est que tout le monde est d'accord sur le fait que trouver une solution pour garantir la communication claire entre tous les participants est une question qui se pose. Ça reste à lui trouver une réponse et nous comptons tous sur les organisateurs pour y remédier.

### **Breaking Patterns of Discrimination by Shani Hatch**

The cycle of racism was at the heart of Tuesday's forum on the impact of racism, discrimination, and ethnocentrism on children.

Speakers addressed the deep entrenchment of this social ill in our societies. Racism's effects are felt in every aspect of life and demands that we educate our children on it. 'You have to deal with racism without making children racist. You have to empower children with knowledge [in order] to fight it effectively,' observed Mrs. Dorothy Davis, manager of The Goodwill Ambassador Program.

Non-discriminatory patterns of living must begin at home with honest, open communication between parents and children. Ms. Kayombo, of the UN Regional Missionary, Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, quoted 'Children are like the carriers of our seeds. What kind of seeds are we planting? Violence and hate. The toys we give them are guns and knives. Where is the joy, love, and harmony?'

Since her youth in the Congo, Ms. Kayombo continued, there has been little done to alleviate the suffering caused by discrimination. It is especially evident in the school system, where a child is placed solely based on his/her background and nationality. Even schoolyard friendships tend to be based on ethnicity, not on individuality.

Racism is not only a system but also a learned behavior. One young attendee at the forum commented, 'Children will not do anything they are not taught'. A stronger focus must be placed on preventing discrimination rather than combating it - only this will break the cycle of racism.

### **Trabajo Infantil por Tania Edith Pariona Tarqui**

El trabajo infantil es un tema que acontece casi en todos los países del mundo, debido a miles y miles de factores, y que requiere un diagnóstico bastante verídico y conciso. Muchas veces los pequeños detalles de la vida cotidiana se pasan por alto sin poder reflexionarla.

La causa esencial de este problema es la pobreza y las necesidades de su pervivencia entre otros. Por tanto, yo las considero un buen paso para lograr un desarrollo, más no así estar en situación de mendicidad.

Muchas personas plantean este problema como causante de la deserción escolar, del pandillaje, prostitución, etc., pero desde la experiencia que yo personalmente tengo, el trabajo infantil agudo a tomar conciencia del contexto donde vives. Además, a través de ello potenciar tus destrezas y habilidades como los cómicos ambulantes y los lustradores de zapatos, entre otros, en conclusión ayuda a disminuir la pobreza y dignifica al hombre.

Es muy importante señalar que el trabajo infantil no se puede dar en condiciones indignas de explotación, maltrato ni discriminación. Pero si un trabajo que esté acorde a tu capacidad física, mental y espiritual, un ejemplo claro es que los niños dentro de un taller de producción de cosas manuales se sienten cómodos y satisfechos de sus habilidades, donde no tienen que estar obligados ni reprimidos por lo que hacen.

Además, el trabajo en general es un derecho, es decir, la facilidad de poder hacerlo si es que está acorde a tu persona, tu realidad y no necesariamente una obligación.

### **Profile: Palestinian Children - In Need of Help by Peter Lippman**

'Something is missing,' said Jehan Helou, dissatisfied as she walked out of a Middle East Caucus session Monday. 'Palestinian children are helpless. The Child Rights Convention gives children

in armed conflicts the basic right to protection. So we want the United Nations to protect children's rights.' Ms. Helou is director of the Tamer Institute for Community Education, based in Ramallah, Palestine. 'What's going on now is a basic violation of the Child Rights Convention,' she says. 'There are children in detention, children being tortured. This has increased in this Intifada.' As to her hopes for the present PrepCom, she says, 'The Outcome document should highlight the effects of occupation upon children.'

Founded in 1989, in the middle of the first Intifada, the Tamer Institute works to address the urgent needs of Palestinian children suffering from the effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The organization's principal focus is to devise ways of continuing and improving children's education in the face of occupation. The present Intifada (uprising) has intensified the challenge of this work.

Ms. Helou described ways that conditions are especially difficult for Palestinian children under the Intifada. The closure of borders creates a series of problems that affect every aspect of children's life: 'Villages are sealed, and it is very difficult to move. The Israeli army has dug trenches around the villages. If someone is sick, they can't go to the hospital. Many children can't reach school.'

The division of Palestinian land into surrounded enclaves has shut down trade and thus heightened poverty, with a particularly harsh impact on the children, Ms. Helou explained. Nor has violence spared them; twenty per cent of the approximately 500 Palestinians who have been killed since last September were children. Over 10,000 people have been hospitalized. Ms. Helou: 'Most bullets are hitting the upper part of the body. Last week a girl from Bir Zeit was hit in the head by a rubber bullet, and needed three stitches. Over 2,000 youths have been disabled.'

The deeper effect of this long-term violence, now stretching into its tenth month, is traumatization of the children: 'If they see a father killed, or a brother or a friend, how can they study? They feel angry.' There is a danger of despair. Ms. Helou says, 'We ask ourselves, will it end? When? Can the Palestinian people go on suffering forever?'

It is here that the Tamer Institute is stepping in to try to rescue another lost generation of Palestinian youth. Its programs to keep children learning are manifold and impressive. There is an ongoing reading program, in which the Institute collaborates with 60 libraries in both the West Bank and Gaza. Once a year, around International Book Day, Tamer sponsors a 'National Reading Week,' with events taking place simultaneously in cities and towns throughout Palestine. The hundreds of events that week include a book fair, puppet shows, story and poetry readings.

Ms. Helou describes the ongoing activities of the Tamer Institute as psycho-social in nature. The Institute sponsors a theater group in Dheishe refugee camp south of Bethlehem that is currently producing a play. 'Youth teams' set up by the Institute use drama as 'distress-relief,' and hold workshops for children in creative writing, story-telling, and painting. 'We encourage children to learn about their rights and to express themselves through writing,' says Ms. Helou. 'Our culture does not encourage this, but we do. The best way to relieve stress and trauma is to encourage self-expression.'

Under the siege-like conditions of the present repression, the Tamer Institute has had to decentralize. Now the organization relies more on the use of the telephone and e-mail to make continued project coordination possible. To improve communication, a Ramallah-based Tamer Institute youth team has started an electronic newsletter.

Ms. Helou names UN resolutions and other international legal documents that most Palestinians have memorized. On paper, they require the world to provide security for Palestinian children. She calls upon the moral obligation of the United States, the United Nations, and even the Israelis to protect Palestinian children and to stop the process of altering the demographic structure of the Occupied Territories. 'The United Nations is strong about this. UN agencies make resolutions on behalf of Palestinians, but you see conflict between the UN and the UN'

Jehan Helou voices both hope and frustration regarding the outcome of the PrepCom proceedings. She says, 'I cherish this conference because we acquaint ourselves with each other in this global village, but at the same time I see us beating around the bush. There should be more courage to solve dilemmas. The United Nations should be beyond narrow politics.'

### **Foundation for the Future: Education is a Pillar for Children by Jovan Kaurin and Miki Grkovic**

There has been a lot of talk about education, but until now, children haven't had the opportunity to make their opinions known. Here are OUR reasons for investing in education.

- at school, we develop a sense of tolerance, community, integration and understanding (which helps in preventing wars, blood feuds, etc.);
- at school, we acquire knowledge needed to live healthy lives (eliminate human vices - drug, alcohol and nicotine abuse);
- at school, we gain skills on which we can base the development of our communities;
- at school, we learn about prevention of terminal diseases - HIV/AIDS and CANCER - which are the worst pests of today.

Here's what we need school to offer us:

- school should enable physical and mental development of children, which is directly linked to their ability to create a new world and make decisions for others once they are in position to do so;

'Children are future members of governments; the shape of the world we're going to live in depends on their education.' - Yelena Ovcharenko, 16

- school should be a center for free expression of children's opinions, ideas and their participation in decision-making, a key component of creating a brighter future;
- school should offer knowledge and education critical to daily survival;



Schools are essential in situations of conflict and crisis. WHY?

- it helps support appropriate development of all children, but especially those in warring or transitional societies. With proper education during these times of crisis, the post-traumatic consequences of conflict are less visible.

We need to emphasize the importance of strong and efficient education. You, as the current leaders, must make the next step...

### **Heard in the Corridors**

**Where's the Beef, Ambassador?** 12 year old Joseph Tamale from Uganda was chosen by the Under-18 group to represent them in a roundtable discussion with Ambassador Thomas Hammarberg and UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy on Monday. We hear that Joseph referred to the Ambassador as 'Mr. Hamburger.' The Ambassador - a seasoned campaigner for child rights - had a good chuckle. But the name may be appropriate to judge from the way some die-hard delegates bare their fangs whenever his name comes up.

**Divine Assistance:** NGOs are wondering whether to read anything into the location of the US briefings for NGOs. Not only are they taking place in the chapel at the Church Center on 44th Avenue, but the briefers have been seen leaning on the altar. Are we missing something?

**When NGOs are not NGOs:** There was a strange exchange over language in the Outcome document that urges governments to 'support' NGOs. The American delegate suggested 'encouraged' instead of 'support' because it was his understanding that support meant financial support. This, he suggested, was at odds with 'the fundamental character' of NGOs. Our NGO friends feel that support is stronger than encouraged and were pleased that 'supported' appears to have survived. They point out that USAID gives out a lot of support for many active American NGOs without in any way compromising their independence.

**Go For Your Gun:** In spite of the nice things we say about them in today's editorial, our young reporters have had a difficult time moving around the UN. One was kicked out of the public gallery at the side panel discussion on sexual exploitation when UN guards suddenly closed the gallery. Another was seized by the scruff of his neck and told not to try and reach our office - otherwise he'd be shot. (We assume that was a joke). Another young writer from Yugoslavia was a bit luckier. He took a knife into the UN to eat his mango. The knife was picked up on the X-ray but the guard let him through when it turned out to be blunt and harmless.

**To Bill Gates From UNICEF:** Fix our computers. We were glad to hear that UNICEF is trying to get Bill Gates to come to the Special Session because we're having trouble with our Windows program. At least one of our writers comes up with 'UNISEX' when she does a spell check for UNICEF. Before NGOs start to snicker, they should try the default button for NGOs. On this computer it comes up as 'Egos.'

**Crock of Something of Other:** We hope it was a typing mistake, but a printed version of the US statement, delivered on Wednesday, referred to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as CROC. The statement spoke of respecting differences...

**Cool Customer:** Carol Bellamy made a nice reference to her deputy, Kul Gautam, in her address to NGO at the Sunday consultations. 'He gets cooler and cooler,' she said. We agree. And it is difficult to stay cool in this PrepCom.

**Meaningful Silence:** There was an extraordinary exchange - or non-exchange - earlier in the week during a discussion in the formal session about poverty. The United States noted that one of the articles (6.2) described the eradication of poverty as being linked to the realization of children's rights. The United States said there was no link between the two. The EU begged to differ and referred to a UNICEF document. The United States said that it had been in touch with UNICEF and did not know of such a study. Both sides turned to Carol Bellamy for confirmation. Ms. Bellamy said nothing. There followed a long silence. We are told the document is entitled: 'The Eradication of Poverty Begins with Children.'

**A Raspberry to Andrew Natsios:** the new Administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) for appearing to suggest that Africans don't know how to tell the time and so cannot be trusted to take the proper dosage of drugs against HIV/AIDS. Natsios was reported by the Boston Globe to have made the remarks during a recent trip to Africa with US Secretary of States Colin Powell. He has been taken to task by furious AIDS activists.

**Find that Kid:** An informal discussion in the Trusteeship Council chamber room about plans for the representation of children at the Special Session took a bizarre turn on Wednesday as governments tried to work out how to find six child representatives from five regions. Sudan said that because Africa has the most countries in the world, the extra child should be African. Malaysia responded that Asia had the most people, so he/she should be Asian. We're not sure they have reached agreement.

**Who's Getting Squeezed?** We appreciate the acronym for a grouping of governments known as 'Juicecans' (JUSCANZ). This stands for Japan, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.