



Calling for a focus on strengthening family care and providing appropriate alternative care for children in the 2014 UNGA resolution on the rights of the child

The undersigned organizations and networks call upon the member States of the UN General Assembly to focus the 2014 UNGA resolution on the rights of the child on strengthening family care and providing appropriate alternative care for children. This focus should also be linked with the current debate on the successor of the MDGs and how to include child protection and care in the post-2015 framework.

It would be the first time for the Child Rights Resolution to have such a focus and this would contribute towards:

- 1) Celebrating the 5th anniversary of the adoption of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children by the UNGA in 2009 (A/RES/64-142) and take stock of the progress achieved in their implementation and challenges faced;
- 2) Ensuring further accountability of Governments in terms of the care and protection of children. Specifically, encourage States Parties to deliver on their commitments enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and taken forward by the Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children; ensuring that States can adopt policies that strengthen parents and families to prevent unnecessary separation and to develop a suitable range of quality care options

for the alternative care of children that are in the best interests of the child, prioritizing family-based or family-like care placements.

- 3) Spearheading the debate on the need for children's care and protection to be central to the post-2015 framework, underscoring the linkages between child protection and broader development.

Why such a focus?

Families face multiple challenges around the world including poverty, HIV/AIDS, chronic emergencies and lack of access to basic services and social protection putting many children at risk of being separated or without family care.

Although numbers of children at risk of losing family care and in alternative care are difficult to obtain, UNICEF estimated that more than 153 million children globally have lost one or both parents. It is important to note that these estimates do not include children who have parents but live in alternative care settings nevertheless.

Over 8 million children around the world live in care institutions. At least 80% of these have one or both parents who are alive. Many children are in danger of becoming unnecessarily separated from their families, while many more are in need of alternative care.

These children are subject to higher risks of exploitation, abuse and other violations. They are at higher risk of being engaged in exploitative child labour, exposed to trafficking, life and work on the street. Without safe and loving family care, these children often experience a downward spiral of economic, social and structural exclusion and marginalization.

What is the added value that a UNGA resolution can bring?

As five years have passed since the adoption of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, it is time to take stock of the progress made and how we have moved forward and look at the impact that the Guidelines have had on the lives of children. How many improvements in laws and policies in line with the Guidelines have occurred? To what extent have they driven family policies to strengthen the capacities of parents and caregivers to better care for and protect children? What progress has been made in the prevention of unnecessary separation of children from their families and what policies and promising practices have been implemented to do so? How diverse, adequate and family-based are the range of options for the children who are in need of alternative care? Are decisions regarding the care of children grounded in a specific determination of their best interests?

The resolution would represent an important opportunity to garner clear agreement on collecting more reliable and systematic data on children in need of alternative care and identify other tangible ways to support the implementation of the Guidelines and States' commitment towards the well-being of children in need of alternative care.

UNGA and child protection in post-2015

The role of parents and the responsibilities of governments to support them are central to securing the rights of children to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect and to be able to thrive in safe family environments. As we examine the central role that protection and human rights must play in the design of the post-2015 framework, a debate in the UNGA on the protection and care of children is necessary and timely. It could also spearhead a dialogue on the need for a goal on child

protection and care in the post 2015 framework and fill the gaps in the current MDGs that have been completely silent on the need to link human security – starting from that of children - and development.

Our contribution

We individually and collectively work around the globe to promote the rights of all children to be protected from violence and to be appropriately cared for. We work with governments and partners, families and children to make that a daily reality. And we stand ready to make that reality and experience available in the UNGA, through side events, support to the negotiations, production of evidence and reports, and in following up the resolution.

The following organizations have endorsed this statement:*

- Association for Childhood Education International
- Azerbaijan NGO Alliance for Children Rights
- Better Care Network (BCN)
- Child Protection in Crisis Learning Network
- Family For Every Child
- Hope & Homes for Children
- International Federation of Educative Communities
- International Foster Care Organisation (IFCO)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- International Social Service (ISS)
- NGO Committee on UNICEF
- RELAF
- Reliable Future- Youth Organization
- Retrak
- Save the Children
- SOS Children's Villages International
- Terre des Hommes- International Federation
- The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada
- Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community of Korea (TRACK)
- World Vision

* As of 10 July 2013. Other organizations have expressed their support and will be added in the near future.