



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Statement

**Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children
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CCPCJ Thematic Discussions on the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration

**Thematic Session 3: Addressing the Needs and Protect the Rights of Children
and Youth in Crime Prevention; and Empowering Youth for Crime Prevention**

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3 pm Vienna time**

Dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by saying that pro-active and sustainable prevention of crimes against children and young people requires a better understanding of specific protection needs and risk factors which make children especially vulnerable to various crimes.

Worldwide millions of children fall victims of crimes both online and offline, such as sexual abuse and exploitation, forced labor and slavery, trafficking, smuggling, illegal adoption, or recruitment by organized criminal gangs, as well as by violent extremism and terrorist groups.

These heinous crimes against children are often result of a complex and interlinked risk factors and demand factors, including

- 1. the increasing vulnerability of children worldwide due to various and interlinked factors** : poverty, social disparities and injustice, , gender inequality, discrimination, migration, political instability, displacement, natural disasters, armed conflict, persecution and violence, lack of access to basic needs and opportunities, despair and lack of hope,
- 2. Growing local and global demand**, which is also increasingly organized, underpinned by evolving technologies, impunity, corruption, weak legal and institutional framework and lack of cooperation.
- 3. The ideological appeal and sophisticated propaganda of terrorist groups, targeting** children who are easier to indoctrinate and less likely to resist, mainly when they are vulnerable, and because they are unable to adequately consent and they lack the capacity to fully understand the consequences of this involvement

4. Increased children connectivity at an increasingly young age benefit to **criminals who are** recruiting victims through social media and gaming websites, taking advantage of publicly available personal information, anonymity for contacting, grooming , recruiting, , controlling and monitoring potential victims. Other technological developments, such as darknet, encryption and cryptocurrencies, **pose additional difficulties for law enforcement to prevent, pro-actively detect and investigate crimes against children.**

Covid-19 Pandemic and humanitarian crisis increased children's vulnerabilities and made situation even more complex.

Addressing interlinked factors that increase children's risks to becoming victims of these crimes is a key for successful prevention

Our efforts and responses must be proactive and tailored. Responses must be multi-dimensional and long-term minimalizing risk and enhancing protective factors at family, school and community levels, and online.

These efforts include:

- **Investing in early detection and prevention measures** such as support for disadvantaged and at-risk children and families. Recognizing the warning signs is an important first step in preventing these crimes.
- **Strengthening cross-sectoral child and gender sensitive** services, including protection, social welfare, health, mental health, education, birth registration, documentation of statelessness, justice linked with inclusive social protection for the most vulnerable

- **Tackling stigma** that can also spread false and harmful information
- **Providing support and care for children** with mental health and substance abuse problems, children on the move, children deprived of liberty and of family care.
- **Legally empowering** children and their caregivers.
- **Educating children and young people** on digital safety, boosting their digital skills, and online empowerment thereby strengthening their cybersecurity.
- **strengthening police, prosecutorial and judicial systems to eradicate corruption and impunity**
- **Strengthening legislation and policies to** make businesses including ICT accountable, including through proactive controls and periodic risk assessments, independent monitoring of illicit financial flows, mixed national and international investigation teams
- **Enhanced cross border cooperation** and improved capabilities for detecting victims, criminal investigations, multisectoral coordination, information sharing and mutual legal assistance.
- **mobilization** and strong multi-stakeholder **partnerships**.

Ladies and gentlemen

In preventing these crimes, we must remember that children and young people are key partners.

Last year, my office conducted a mapping exercise of how children are influencing action and improving the world as agents of change, which features examples of children being engaged in crime prevention efforts.

In **Panama**, 'Los Imparables', a child-led group works on helping prevent violence by encouraging their peers not to join street gangs in their communities through cultural, educational, and personal development activities .

In **Chile's** Araucanía region, where terrorist attacks and hate crimes happen often, adolescents are looking to promote a peaceful society through street art expression to prevent violence.

In **Kenya**, 'Re-Imagining New Communities' is implementing Children-Led-Community Peace Labs, empowering children to become peace builders in their communities and in their schools.

These are just some examples among others

We must never forget that children and young people are part of the solution **and drivers of changes**. We need to involve them more and more. This requires us to provide empowering and safe pathways for children and young people to receive information, to express themselves and report freely, to participate in decision making processes while supporting their peer-to-peer protection initiatives.

Ladies and gentlemen

Less than 8 years remains for us to make the ambitious targets of the 2030 Agenda a reality.

Building back better after the pandemic and beyond has to be seen as an opportunity to move from a siloed and reactive prevention to a sustainable and proactive prevention of these crimes, involving all key stakeholders including children and young people , leaving no one behind

We know what to do. So let's do it for and with children!

Thank you!

