

Joint statement submitted by ECPAT International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status; International Save the Children Alliance and World Vision International (WVI), nongovernmental organizations in general consultative status; International Catholic Child Bureau (ICCB), International Federation Terre des Hommes (IFTDH), Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF), non-governmental organizations in special consultative status and Plan International Inc., a nongovernmental organization on the Roster.

Child Rights to protection from sexual violence¹

Mr. President,

ECPAT International, International Save the Children Alliance, World Vision International, International Federation Terre des Hommes, International Catholic Child Bureau, Women's World Summit Foundation, Plan International Inc., welcome the organization of the annual full day meeting on the Rights of the Child with focus on sexual violence.

Children around the world continue to be among those most affected by violence and social injustices. As demonstrated by three World Congresses against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and the findings of the UN Study on Violence against Children, sexual violence against children is pervasive and widespread but preventable when the threshold of social and State tolerance is diminished and transformed to concrete action for child protection.

Sexual violence impacts deeply on the mental and physical health of children and affects their wellbeing in profound and lasting ways. Due to their developmental stage of dependence on adult protection children are often the easy targets of the most violent forms of expression of unequal power relations in their society (gender, age, etc) and the victims of sexual violence as a weapon of war and form of conquest. Sexual violence against children, particularly child pornography, is also increasing due to the recent rapid development of Information and Communication Technology and needs urgent response as articulated in the recent international/regional instruments and urged by special procedures.

Much needs to be done to prevent and end such violations and the time for accelerated action is now. Thus we welcome the appointment of the Special Representative on Violence against Children and the more recent appointment of the Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, to lead and coordinate the follow up for implementation of

¹ African Child Policy Forum, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, War Child Holland (without consultative status) also share the views expressed in this statement.

the recommendations of UN Study on Violence, the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and the Security Council Resolutions 1820 and 1888. Coordination across these mandates and with other relevant mechanisms of the HRC, the UN and regional mechanisms will ensure that sexual violence against children in all its forms and settings and everywhere that it occurs is systematically addressed. Such collaboration needs to be facilitated and supported.

All gaps in protection of children rights leave them vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation and thus must be addressed and their root causes comprehensively. As a priority, countries are urged to define, in national plans, the actions and strategies that they will take to prevent and combat sexual violence against children in all forms and settings and the resources that they will allocate for implementation. Effective prevention and protection of children requires States to strengthen and rationalize the systems of child protection and ensure that these include relevant and robust measures to combat all forms of sexual violence against children with accountability for response and delivery to all children. The consequences of weaknesses in the systems of child protection can be exacerbated and multiplied in situations of crisis and humanitarian emergencies. Measures for child protection from sexual violence must thus be integral to mitigation and emergency response to ensure that the rights of children in these circumstances will not be compromised in any way but upheld and respected.

The work that must be done to prevent and end sexual violence against children will require concerted efforts and we look forward to working alongside the Council for its achievement.

Thank you.