

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL TO DEVELOP UN COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE FOR VIOLATIONS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

PRESS RELEASE

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Today (Wednesday 24 March 2010), the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva agreed to start drafting a new international human rights instrument enabling the Committee on the Rights of the Child to receive and examine communications from children and their representatives alleging violation of their rights. The communications procedure will be established by a new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child which came into force 20 years ago.

"This is a great breakthrough for children's rights", said Anita Goh, the NGO Group for the CRC Advocacy Officer coordinating the international campaign for the new mechanism, "The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the only core international human rights treaty that does not have a communications procedure. We have lobbied very hard for the past four years to get this result."

In June 2009, the UN Human Rights Council established an intergovernmental Working Group to "explore the possibility" of drafting a new Optional Protocol. The Working Group met in December 2009 and States, experts and civil society had the opportunity to discuss the different issues raised by the creation of this new instrument.

Now, a few months later, the Council has adopted by consensus a new resolution that gives the Working Group the mandate to draft an Optional Protocol.

"Starting the drafting now is a strong signal from the international community that children are rights holders too and that they have the right to complain internationally when no effective remedy is available to them in their own country", said Ms Goh, "We look forward to the first drafting session later this year and will continue our work to ensure that this new mechanism is both effective and child-sensitive".

The first session of the Working Group is expected to take place in December 2010 and the new instrument could be adopted by the end of 2011.

Background note

A coalition of over 80 international and national NGOs, supported by more than 600 organisations in all regions, has been actively lobbying for the establishment of this new mechanism since 2006. The coalition is led by Sara Austin (World Vision) and Peter Newell (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children).

A complaints or "communications" procedure allows individuals, groups or their representatives, claiming that their rights have been violated by a State that is a party to a Convention, to bring a communication before the relevant UN Committee, provided that the State has accepted the procedure.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Anita Goh on +41 77 446 0083 or goh@childrightsnet.org

For background information on the international campaign, see http://crin.org/law/CRC_complaints/