

**Building a World that is Safer for Children:
A UNGA Side Event on the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children**

Co-hosted by the Government of Mexico, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages International, and World Vision International

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UNITED NATIONS (UN)—On Sunday, September 27th, world leaders entered their final day of the UN Sustainable Development Summit where the Agenda 2030 was adopted. This Agenda is a transformative, global roadmap that can achieve sustainable development and the world that every child has a right to by 2030. Harnessing the momentum and excitement around this historic summit, distinguished speakers from government, the office of the Secretary-General, UN agencies, the World Bank, civil society, and the private sector focused on translating this framework into sustained efforts and partnership to achieve a world that is safer for all children.

On this historic day, a high-level side event, focused on the developing Global Partnership to End Violence against Children took place. The issue of protecting children from violence is of particular significance as the new sustainable development agenda calls for “a world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation” (para. 8), and commits under Goal 16 to “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children” (target 16.2). The event sought to draw attention to this new partnership and garner commitments from all sectors to work together, and engage senior government officials and influential leaders around creating a world that protects children from all forms of violence.

H.E. Mr. Juan Sandoval, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the UN, opened the meeting by discussing the importance of addressing violence against children, and calling target 16.2 a historic landmark. He further highlighted the need for data, and recalled the creation of a national commission to measure social impact in Mexico, as well as the issuing of legislation to protect children from different forms of violence. “The partnership should provide a platform to learn from each other’s experience, good practices and lessons learned, and foster concrete and measurable results,” he said.

UNICEF Deputy Executive Director **Ms. Yoka Brandt** echoed Ambassador Sandoval’s remarks and acknowledged that “violence against children may not always claim their lives, but it always claims their childhood.” She emphasized the need to create a global partnership to collectively mobilize efforts to end violence against children. “By convening government, international nongovernmental organizations, civil society, faith leaders, the private sector, philanthropists, researchers, academics, and young people, this partnership will have the authority and scope to confront unacceptable levels of violence faced by children worldwide,” Ms. Brandt said.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, **Ms. Marta Santos Pais** called upon all actors to unite in a global alliance. “Children have high expectations on us all. They want a future where all children and everyone else can enjoy a safe, happy and healthy life, free from fear and from violence in all its forms. This is their vision. But as they tell me time and time again, ‘a vision without a plan is only a nice dream; and a plan without a vision can become a nightmare.’ The implementation of the SDG agenda can help build a world as big as children’s dream. This is children’s ambition and this is the noble cause we have at hand!”

H.E. Dr. Yohana Yembise, Indonesian Minister of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection, pointed to the need for concrete commitments at the national level to prevention of, and response to violence against children. Minister Yembise highlighted strategies being implemented in Indonesia to address this issue, including a survey for children through social media on the priority actions that their government needs to take, support for peer-to-peer networks to address bullying, and an enhancement of the evidence base. “The more we learn, the more meaningful our interventions are,” she stated.

Mr. Gary Cohen, founder of Together for Girls, reiterated the call for multi-stakeholder action on violence against children, and the critical importance of gathering evidence, supporting national plans of actions, and doing global advocacy and raising awareness.

Speaking on behalf of the child-focused agencies, **Ms. Meg Gardinier**, Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance, reiterated the commitment of her colleagues to partnering to end violence against children. “We are fully aware of the importance of working together, with governments, UN entities, civil society organizations, as well as children and young people. As civil society, we realize the importance of this partnership and its great potential to ensure an inclusive, open and transparent forum to catalyze change and create knowledge.”

Dr. Etienne Krug, Director, Department for Management of NCDs, Violence and Injury Prevention at the World Health Organization (WHO), stressed the need to work across silos to create synergies between all violence-related targets, and those related to risk factors for violence (e.g. alcohol, housing, poverty reduction, access to justice for all). “The partnership must focus on promoting what works, and an important next step for the partnership is to focus on the development of a collectively owned package of key interventions which all partners will promote,” said Krug. To this end, he noted that WHO will host a meeting in November 2015 to develop such a package of effective and affordable interventions.

Ms. Charlotte Vuyiswa McClain-Nhlapo, Global Disability Advisor in the Social, Urban, Rural and Resilience Global Practice of the World Bank Group, articulated the particular vulnerability of children with disabilities to violence, and also remarked on the importance of including all children in the efforts to prevent and respond to violence. “Having good disaggregated data that can provide a strong and robust narrative is fundamental,” she said. “Enabling legislative frameworks and creating a social movement to end violence against children are also important.”

The remarks and commitment expressed by all of the panelists and members of the audience to end violence against children reflects a growing acknowledgement of the widespread impact that violence has in the lives of boys and girls. Moreover, speakers highlighted why a global partnership that unites actors, will and resources in a global and national pledge to action, is essential and well-timed. As Ms. Santos Pais recalled, “protecting children from violence is a human rights imperative, a question of good governance and also of good economics.” It reduces children’s potential, and decreases the economic return we get from investment in their health, education, and nutrition. Violence prevention and response is integral to the success of all the goals and targets under the 2030 Agenda.

