

Dear colleagues of DCI,

The **HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HELD ITS 21ST SESSION (HRC – 21)** from 10 September – 28 September. A general roundup of the session is accessible online:

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12609&LangID=E>

CHILD RIGHTS featured in a number of reports, including thematic topics such as violence within the juvenile justice system, human rights of juveniles deprived of liberty, the death penalty, children and armed conflict, forced marriages and gender based violence. All reports are available online:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session21/Pages/ListReports.aspx>

Children's rights also featured in a number of resolutions adopted (all resolutions are available online:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session21/Pages/ResDecStat.aspx>):

- A Resolution on 'The human right to **SAFE DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION**' was adopted (A/HRC/21/L.1). The document pointed out that every year, approximately 1.5 million children under five years of age die and 443 million school days are lost as a result of water- and sanitation-related diseases, affirming the need to focus on local and national perspectives in considering the issue, leaving aside questions of international watercourse law and all transboundary water issues.
- A Resolution on 'Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a **BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF TRADITIONAL VALUES OF HUMANKIND: BEST PRACTICES**' was adopted (A/HRC/21/L.2), requesting the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to collect information from States Members of the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders on best practices in the application of traditional values while promoting and protecting human rights and upholding human dignity, and to submit a summary thereon to the Human Rights Council before its twenty-fourth session (2013).
- A Resolution on **ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES** (A/HRC/21/L.5), called upon states to prevent and investigate with special attention the enforced disappearance of persons belonging to vulnerable groups, especially children, and the enforced disappearance of women, as they may become particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and other forms of violence, and to bring the perpetrators of those enforced disappearances to justice, recognizing that enforced disappearance has special consequences for women and children.
- A Resolution on **PREVENTABLE MATERNAL MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY** and human rights (A/HRC/21/L.10), requests the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) to prepare a report on how the technical guidance has been applied by States and other relevant actors - to be presented to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-seventh session (2014). The HRC also requests all States to renew their political commitment to eliminate preventable maternal mortality and morbidity at

the local, national, regional and international levels and encourages States to take action at all levels to address the interlinked root causes of maternal mortality and morbidity, such as poverty, malnutrition, harmful practices, lack of accessible and appropriate health-care services, information and education, and gender inequality, and to pay particular attention to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

- A Resolution on **HUMAN RIGHTS AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE** was adopted (A/HRC/21/L.24), underlining the particular needs of children in transitional justice processes and the obligation to enable their full and effective participation and, as their age permits, in all aspects of post-conflict recovery; the document also highlights the lack of effective rule of law mechanisms particularly regarding children, and encourages that specific measures are taken for their free participation and protection; the document also requests the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) to submit an analytical study to the Human Rights Council, prior to its twenty-seventh session (2014), focusing on gender-based and sexual violence in relation to transitional justice, the effective participation of victims, and the participatory procedures necessary to address the different needs and opportunities of women, men and children, including good practices in the field of truth-seeking, justice, reparation and institutional reform.
- A resolution on the '**SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC**' was adopted (A/HRC/21/L.32), strongly condemning the continued widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities and the Government controlled militia Shabbiha; condemning, inter alia, the use of heavy weapons and force against civilians, massacres, arbitrary executions, extrajudicial killings, the killing and persecution of protestors, human rights defenders and journalists, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, interference with access to medical treatment, torture, sexual violence and ill-treatment, including against children, as well as any human rights abuses by armed opposition groups.

During the HRC – 21 key children's rights focused *side events* include:

- **"HOW CAN THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL FURTHER IMPROVE THE PROTECTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY?"** - this event was held by the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice (IPJJ) with the objective to discuss the above former reports adopted on the subject and their recommendations, disseminating them to a wider audience and discussing how to better protect children from violations of their rights, strengthen the commitment of all concerned stakeholders and enhance accountability mechanisms; the ultimate focus was on identifying the priorities for actions, in particular those that could be undertaken by the HRC. A report of the event is available on the IPJJ website: http://www.ipjj.org/en/resources/database/document/?tx_browser_pi1%5Bsho wUid%5D=556

- **'CHILDREN AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION'**, held by Migrants Rights International, Migrant Forum Asia, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) and UNICEF: the event highlighted the challenges as well as policy measures to enable children of migrants in countries of origin and undocumented children in countries of destination to uphold their human rights; the event also featured the viewing of a 'Undocumentary', which is available online: <http://www.undocumentary.org/>.
- **"FORCED AND CHILD MARRIAGE: A GLOBAL PROBLEM"**, held by Franciscans International - where our colleague and friend Ms. Virginia MURILLO (DCI-Costa Rica) was panellist. This event focused on the fact that every year, an estimated 10 million girls aged under 18 are married worldwide with little or no say in the matter, looking at the action needed by the international community to address this practice.
- **"THE LONG WAY OUT"**, held by Terres des Hommes, included the screening of a film which is one of the few existing attempts to follow the story of six children over a period of 8 years - who are survivors of trafficking and have been reintegrated into their communities - to see what has happened to them, what choices they made in life and how they see their future now.

During the **61ST SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**, the States of Albania, Liberia and Canada were under review. DCI - Albania submitted a stakeholders report and DCI - Liberia was present at the session, and even held a private meeting with the Rapporteur of the Committee: Ms. Agnes AIDOO. For further information and documentation on the 61st session:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/crcs61.htm>.

As for the imminent elections of the CRC: DCI-IS met with the candidate Ms. Sara DE JESÚS OVIEDO FIERRO (Chile), who is a strong supporter of DCI's work and promises a prosperous potential mandate within the Committee.

On the 28th September, the **2012 DAY OF GENERAL DISCUSSION (DGD)** of the Committee on the Rights of the Child was held, this year's topic: **the RIGHTS OF ALL CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION** (<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/discussion2012.htm>). Conclusions included: the need for a Global Study on the transnational cooperation measures necessary to ensure the protection of children on the move and to guarantee their rights independently of their immigration status; the need for international cooperation; a call for joint systems of governments and national measures - always bearing in mind the best interests of the child; the need for case by case assessment was also promoted, along with the need for regular migration channels; it was further stated that children should never be detained, and States need to recognize human mobility as a human right of children.

During the day, a side-event was organised by the International Detention Coalition (<http://idcoalition.org/>) entitled 'Hear Our Voices: Children and Immigration Detention', with six formerly detained children and young people from around the world sharing their migration and detention experiences.

The Committee's 2013 Day of General Discussion would be on the theme 'Media, Social Networks and the Rights of the Child'.

For further information on the Committee's 2012 DGD:

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12606&LangID=E>

More recently, on the 11th October, the first International ***DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD*** was celebrated, highlighting the issues of forced child marriage; for more information:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/Media.aspx?IsMediaPage=true&LangID=E>

During this day, the launch of "Because I am a Girl" Campaign, promoted by Plan International, also took place (for more information: www.becauseiamagirl.org).

A side-event 'Joining Forces to Prevent Early Marriage' was also held, wherein a discussion with countries, UN agencies and civil society to learn about the scale of early marriage, the factors that contribute to it, its health and social effects and about ongoing initiatives to prevent it: "*Early marriage affects 10 million girls under the age of 18 each year, 38% of girls in developing countries, marry before the age of 18, 16 million adolescent girls give birth every year*".

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to receive further information on the aforementioned documents and activities – I remain at your disposal.

All the very best from Geneva,