

Dear colleagues of DCI,

I hope all is well.

June has been quite a busy month here at the International Secretariat, between the training on international human rights mechanisms for our colleagues of the Middle East and North Africa (please view the press release: : <http://defenceforchildren.org/news/latest-news/195-defence-for-children-international-concludes-training-sessions-and-awareness-raising-in-child-justice-for-the-mena-region-new.html>) and the International Executive Council periodic meeting, along with the Human Rights Council and Committee on the Rights of the Child in session.

The **HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL** held its 23rd session (HRC – 23), from 27 May to 14 June.

✓ **CHILD RIGHTS** featured in a number of **REPORTS**:

- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the **highest attainable standard of physical and mental health** (A/HRC/23/41); during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteurs on health, UNICEF assured evidence that “detention of parents could permanently harm children’s mental and physical health”.
- Report of the Special Rapporteur (SR) on the human rights of **migrants** (A/HRC/23/46); during the presentation of the report the SR recommended that children should never be detained.
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on **trafficking in persons, especially women and children** (A/HRC/23/48); during the presentation of her annual report and said: “Demands for sexual exploitation, cheap labour and domestic workers, organ removal, illicit adoption and forced marriages, begging or exploitation by armed groups all fuel human trafficking”.
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the **independence of judges and lawyers** (A/HRC/23/43); which specifically to children: "Access to justice for children requires that all children, however they come into contact with the law, be able to participate fully in legal proceedings. While enjoying the same guarantees as adults, children require special protection, as their best interests are paramount. A recent report (by CRIN) showed that legal systems can be immensely confusing and difficult, if not impossible, to navigate for children, especially without the help of a legal professional."
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to **education** (A/HRC/23/35)
- Report of the Working Group on the issue of **discrimination against women in law and in practice** (A/HRC/23/50)
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on **violence against women**, its causes and consequences (A/HRC/23/49); during the Interactive Dialogue several speakers stressed that all relevant actors must be engaged in the combat against violence against women and girls. It was important to have an effective legal and institutional framework, but implementation and monitoring were also crucial in that respect. Empowering women and fighting gender stereotypes were central to preventing violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence, and to promoting democracy and development.

- Report of the Special Rapporteur on **extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions** (A/HRC/23/47)
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of **human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied** since 1967 (A/HRC/23/21); during Interactive Dialogue with the special rapporteur, DCI – Palestine delivered an oral statement. You may see the delivery of the oral statement via webcast (at minute '30:01): <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/human-rights-council/regular-sessions/watch/id-on-palestinian-territories-31st-meeting-23rd-regular-session-of-human-rights-council/2468113581001>
- Report of the Independent International **Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the Syrian Arab Republic** (A/HRC/23/58); during Interactive Dialogue with the COI, DCI delivered an oral statement. You may see the delivery of the oral statement via webcast (at minute '01:09): <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/human-rights-council/regular-sessions/watch/id-coi-syria-contd-19th-meeting-23rd-regular-session-of-human-rights-council/2433845030001>
 Syria's war has reached "new levels of brutality", with evidence of fresh suspected massacres, sieges and violations of children's rights. Children have been taken hostage, forced to watch torture and even participate in beheadings, it says; others have been killed while fighting. During an urgent debate on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Syria, the Council adopted a resolution in which it strongly condemned the widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities and the Government-affiliated militias, including against the people of Al Qusayr, and requested the Commission of Inquiry to urgently conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the events in Al Qusayr.
- Report on **discrimination against women on nationality-related matters, including the impact on children** - Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/23/23)
- Summary of the Human Rights Council **full-day meeting on the rights of the child** - Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/23/59)
- During the General Debate on the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**, an oral statement was delivered on behalf of the NGO, UPR.info regarding the adoption of recommendations by States. Defence for Children International co-signed this statement.

All reports are available at the following link: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session23/Pages/23RegularSession.aspx>

- ✓ During the HRC – 23, many key child rights focused ***SIDE EVENTS*** took place, including:
- **'CHILDREN & JUSTICE IN TIMES OF ARMED CONFLICT: THE MIDDLE-EAST EXPERIENCE'** - held (07 June) by DCI - International Secretariat and sponsored

by the Permanent Mission of Luxembourg. This event aimed to raise awareness and share experiences on the situation of children involved and/or victims of armed conflict in Syria, Iraq and Palestine, promoting child protection and respect of the basic human rights of the child. DCI gathered a panel of experts from the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI), United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child Committee (CRC) and NGOs working in the Middle East. Rifat Kassis, DCI General Commissioner for the Middle East and North Africa region moderated the discussion.

A press release is available online: <http://defenceforchildren.org/news/latest-news/197-representatives-from-the-commission-of-inquiry-on-syria-un-crc-committee-and-ngos-discuss-children-affected-by-armed-conflict-in-the-middle-east.html>

- **'JUVENILE JUSTICE IN THE ARAB WORLD'**, held (12 June) by DCI - International Secretariat and sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Qatar and the Supreme Council for Family Affairs of the State of Qatar. The event highlighted the situation of children involved in the justice system in the Arab world the principle of detention as a measure of last resort, promoting the implementation of international juvenile justice standards.

Panelists included Ms. Rishmawi, Chief of the Rule of Law branch of the OHCHR; Mr. Kotrane, member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; Dr. Shaheen Sardari Ali, United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; amongst others.

A press release is available online: <http://defenceforchildren.org/news/latest-news/196-members-from-the-crc-ohchr-and-the-un-working-group-on-arbitrary-detention-discuss-juvenile-justice-in-the-arab-world-with-dci-representatives-from-the-mena-region.html>

- **'BUSINESS RESPONSIBILITY IN ADVANCING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR'**, organized (04 June) by DCI Costa Rica with DCI International Secretariat, and in collaboration with ECLT Foundation, Global March against Child Labour and Stop Child Labour Campaign.

This side event, held in light of the International Day against Child Labour, focused on the advancement of child rights through social dialogue and dissemination of key declarations all containing recommendations for action directed to business, unions, governments and communities in support of Principle 5 of the UN Global Compact on Children's Rights and Business Principles, which advocates for the effective abolition of child labour.

- **'CHILD DOMESTIC WORK - A REALITY OF VIOLENCE AND SLAVERY'**, organised (11 June) by members of the Working Group on Children and Violence (WG/CAV) - which DCI convenes; the event aimed to highlight the harsh conditions of child domestic workers, to present protective measures and to provide a space for States to dialogue regarding the ILO Domestic Workers Convention (No.189). Panelists included former Human Rights Council president, Amb. Dupuy Lasarre; our colleague from DCI-Costa Rica, Virginia Murillo and Senior Legal Officer of the ILO/IPEC, Ms. Noguchi, amongst others.

✓ **COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD:**

The 63rd session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which took place from 27 May to 14 June, saw the examination of Israel, Guinea Bissau, Armenia, Rwanda, Uzbekistan and Slovenia. Also, it welcomed the arrival of its new members, with whom DCI had the honour, during a private meeting, to discuss possible synergy sources.

Presently, during the pre-session for the 65th session (which will take place from 13 to 31 January 2014 / <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/crcs65.htm>), DCI delegates from Yemen and the national coalition from Russia were here in Geneva in order to present alternative reports to the Committee.

Furthermore, General Comment No.14, concerning Best Interests of the Child is now available at the following link: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm>

- ✓ Please note the possibility to contribute to **UN POST-2015 REPORTS** at the following link: <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/nglsconsultation>

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,

Anna D. Tomasi