

# CONCEPT NOTE

## 2017 Global Conference on Children on the Move

### 12-13 June 2017

#### Berlin

#### Background

The world is currently witnessing a continuous growing movement of children across the globe. An estimated 50 million children are on the move and more than half of these girls and boys, 28 million in total, have fled violence and insecurity. Increasing conflict, rising inequality and the growing impact of climate change are contributing to a mass displacement of children from their homes, endangering their survival, disrupting their education and exposing them to severe protection risks, including violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The number of child refugees under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) mandate has more than doubled in just 10 years. In many cases, this displacement results in a move across borders, into neighboring countries or across continents, as the recent refugee crisis in the Middle East, Africa, Europe and South East Asia are showing.

Whilst additional normative regimes of protection may apply depending upon a child's individual circumstances (refugee, migrant worker, trafficked, torture survivor, etc.), all children on the move are children first and foremost and entitled to all of the fundamental human rights protections enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) without discrimination or exception. The normative framework of child rights requires all States to develop and implement responses for child protection and support that are child-focussed, coherent, holistic, and coordinated both within and between countries.

Throughout 2016, a number of events and initiatives have focussed on large-scale movements of refugees, migrants and other displaced persons and have included some discussions on their impact on children. These events included: the "Supporting Syria and the Region" conference held in London; the World Humanitarian Summit; events organised on the protection of children on the move on the margins of the Human Rights Council; the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) summit on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants in September 2016; the Leaders' Summit organised by the Obama administration; and the UNHCR Global Dialogue on Protection Challenges on Children on the Move. Additionally, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015 are also of fundamental importance for the protection of children in the context of international mixed migration flows.

States, donors and international agencies made important commitments on education, resettlement, funding, protection and jobs creation during the events outlined above. They initiated processes that have the potential to deeply influence the international governance of large scale movements and which may therefore have a great impact on children. The UNGA summit on addressing large

#### DEFINITION OF "CHILDREN ON THE MOVE"

***"Children moving for a variety of reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily, within or between countries, with or without their parents or other primary caregivers, and whose movement, while it may open up opportunities, might also place them at risk (or at an increased risk) of economic or sexual exploitation, abuse, neglect and violence".***

#### Explanatory note

'Children on the Move' is not meant as a 'new' category of children. It is an umbrella definition which brings together the multitude of categories in which children who move have been, often unhelpfully, divided. This definition therefore includes:

- ⇒ children who have been trafficked,
- ⇒ children who migrate (e.g. to pursue better life opportunities, look for work or education or to escape exploitative or abusive situations at home);
- ⇒ children displaced by conflict and natural disasters.

All of these children might find themselves at risk, especially of being exposed to various forms of abuse and involved in the worst forms of exploitation. This concept, by highlighting the common risks and challenges faced by these children but also their differences in terms of gender, age and their agency, aims to re-focus interventions and ensure coherent policies by placing the protection of the child at the centre as well as the need to support the positive effect that mobility can have on improving children's life chances.

movements of refugees and migrants, for example, launched an 18-month process to develop two agreements – the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – which will provide the framework of action for the international community.

Additionally, in 2016 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee) and the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW Committee) began a process to develop a Joint General Comment on the human rights of all children in the context of international migration, which is expected to be finalized in late 2017. This Joint General Comment is the first of its kind by the CRC Committee and will substantially clarify the obligations of States parties to the CRC and CMW vis-à-vis children on the move.

### **The Berlin Conference on Children on the Move**

As 2017 marks the launch of these global processes, it also provides the perfect opportunity to convene an *ad hoc* global event on children on the move. Such an event, organised by a coalition of agencies, will be a follow-up to the 2010 Barcelona Conference on Children on the Move, providing the opportunity to take stock of progress since 2010.

The Global Conference on Children on the Move will be an inter-agency event. Its organisation is led by a steering committee of over 20 agencies (<http://www.childrenonthemove.org/who-we-are/>).

The conference will bring together government representatives, intergovernmental organisations, civil society, other humanitarian and academic institutions, donors, the private sector and children themselves.

This event will provide important inputs to the UNCRC and CMW Committees in the development of the Joint General Comment on the human rights of all children in the context of international migration; to ensure that State commitments to comply with obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child are upheld in the specific text of the negotiated documents; and, most importantly, to ensure that the implementation of State commitments actually respond in practice to the specific needs and rights of all children who are on the move.

### **The 2017 Global Conference on Children on the Move as part of the Initiative on Child Rights in the Global Compacts**

The conference is part of a broader multi-agency Initiative on Child Rights in the Global Compacts, which is co-chaired by Save the Children and Terres des Hommes ([www.childrenonthemove.org](http://www.childrenonthemove.org)). The aim of the initiative is to ensure that both global compacts are adopted with coherent and harmonised child-focused goals, targets and indicators in line with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda.

As part of the initiative, experts will draft a working document on child rights in the global compacts, drawing on broad consultations with and numerous contributions from other experts. Ultimately, the working document will aim to spell out the goals, targets and indicators that the two

#### **THE 2010 BARCELONA CONFERENCE**

In 2010, a group of organisations part of the Global Movement for Children, with the support of the Oak Foundation and technical coordination by Save the Children, convened a three-day Global Conference on Children on the Move in Barcelona, Spain.

The Barcelona Conference brought together government representatives, UN agencies, civil society, academics and experts, and children themselves to discuss and promote a comprehensive understanding of the issues children face when on the move, share knowledge and learning, and stimulate South-South and North-South dialogue.

Save the Children provided technical support and coordinated the work of a steering committee which included Terres des Hommes, Plan International, UNICEF, the University of Sussex and the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Najat M'jid. The steering committee was involved in developing the focus, themes, programme and speakers for the conference.

global compacts should include in order to fully reflect commitments to children's rights in the context of large flows of migrants and refugees.

The recommendations from the conference will be included in the working document and participants will discuss key actions to be carried out individually and/or jointly to influence the global compacts and international debates and processes on migrants and refugees, ensuring that children's rights are at the core of such processes.

### **Objectives of the conference**

The conference will focus on three broad set of objectives:

- Demonstrate the benefits of **collective action** to achieve clear positive outcomes for Children on the Move.
- Assess progress and develop plans to **accelerate** implementation of commitments taken towards children on the move.
- Explore the **future** for harmonious societies

In particular, the conference will aim to:

- **Create a constituency of actors** that can take action (collectively and individually) around a number of key common objectives and priorities related to the protection and support of children on the move over the next 18 months – in the lead-up to the adoption of the global compacts and beyond.
- **Discuss concrete steps, gaps and recommendations on key priorities**, including ensuring that: children's best interests are always a priority; children have access to appropriate care and support and are never detained or sent back to countries where they are not safe; children on the move have access to key services, including education; children are fully protected from exploitation, abuse and violence, including child trafficking; children are not discriminated against and can integrate in host communities.
- **Explore innovative solutions and exchanges of promising practices**. The conference will contribute to and host a consultation about the Joint General Comment on the human rights of all children in the context of international migration. In doing so, the event will help ensure that the principle that children are children first and foremost, irrespective of their migration or legal status, is at the core of any future process.
- **Explore opportunities for action and mobilisation to influence the global compacts**.
- **Bring in the experience of national and regional initiatives** and key issues that impact children on the move and that should therefore be included in the global compacts.
- **Ensure that innovative and impactful good practices are discussed and shared** between key actors operating nationally, regionally and globally.
- **Make the connection with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

### **Themes of the conference**

The conference will focus on the following key areas of action reflected in commitments in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants:

#### **NON-DISCRIMINATION (CRC Art. 2)**

Integration into host communities, and end to discrimination, racism and xenophobia by empowering and supporting both children on the move and host communities and ensuring an equitable distribution of resources within local communities to benefit all.

#### **BEST INTERESTS (CRC Art. 3)**

CoM are children first and foremost and primary consideration at all times to the best interests of the child (Ref. NY Declaration para. 32; 58 – Principle COM 1). Respect for right to express views freely in all matters affecting the child (Ref. Principle COM 9).

#### **PROTECTION CRC Arts. 3 & 22 [protection],**

protection from violence and exploitation, including child trafficking. (Ref. NY Declaration para. 23 ; 29; 32; 59; 32; 81; 82 – Annex 1 n. 5; Principle COM 2; 7)

**ACCESS TO SERVICES** (Art. 24 [health], Art. 28 [education], Art. 39 [psychosocial])

Access to essential services such as protection, health, education and psychosocial services. Education for children within a few months of arrival/prioritize budgetary provision to facilitate this;

**CHILD IMMIGRATION DETENTION** (CRC Committee, General Comment No. 6)

End of child immigration detention (ref 33 – Principle COM 4) or to return to countries where they are not safe (COM 5). Instead, they will be cared for in a safe and nurturing environment, appropriate for a child. (Ref. NY Declaration para. 22; Annex I n. 5).

**SOLUTIONS** (CRC Committee, General Comment No. 6)

Access to safe and regular entry routes, such as family reunification, to avoid family separation; humanitarian visas or private sponsorships; (Ref. NY Declaration para. 14 a; 57; 79; COM 5) implement commitments to increase resettlement and establish a permanent framework for responsibility sharing in the Refugee Compact (Ref. NY Declaration para. 68; Annex 1)

**Participants**

The conference will include the participation of UN agencies; civil society organisations, both humanitarian and development and human rights-focussed; donors; the private sector; government representatives; academics; practitioners; and children and young people themselves.

**Child participation**

Children and young people will also be key actors during the conference. Up to 25 children and young people are currently being selected for participation in the conference through regional and global processes facilitated by members of the Steering Committee.

Children and young people will attend a preparatory meeting prior to the conference and will participate in thematic and plenary sessions throughout the two days. Furthermore, an *ad hoc* intergenerational plenary panel will be held on the first day of the conference. During this session, children and young people will discuss their experiences of migration, challenges and possible solutions with representatives from various agencies.

**Format of the conference**

The conference will aim at balancing panel discussions with interactive parallel sections and opportunities for maximising interaction between participants.

The conference structure includes:

1. Plenary sessions/interactive panels with Q&As from the floor:
  - a. A plenary session on Day 1 focussing on the global context of children on the move, with panellists from UN agencies; key experts; civil society and state representatives
  - b. An inter-generational dialogue on Day 1 during which children and young people can discuss the challenges of and opportunities for children on the move with senior representatives from various agencies
  - c. A plenary session on Day 2 on collective action and influencing the global compacts
  - d. Reporting sessions from workshops
2. Thematic sessions on the priority themes on Day 1 to discuss challenges, gaps and recommendations related to integration child-focussed goals, targets and indicators in the global compacts
3. Innovative solutions sessions on Day 2 to discuss examples of promising and innovative practices
4. A 'What Next' area that will host parallel sessions on strategies for influencing the global compacts; the working document on child rights in the global compacts, prepared as part of the Initiative on Child Rights in the Global Compacts; and the Joint General Comment on the human rights of all children in the context of international migration.

**Please find attached the conference agenda.**