



Summit of the Future Action Days Side Event

[Summit of the Future and beyond: a conversation with and for children on the impact on children's rights and the environment]

[20 September 2024, 13.00 CEST, Online via Zoom]

Organized by: [DKA Austria, Child Rights Connect, Loyola Centre for Media and Communication, Consortium Nepal, Bal Suraksha Abhiyan Trust, Yuwalaya, Alana, Österreichische Liga für Menschenrechte, Katholische Jugend und Jungschar Burgenland, Terre des Hommes International Federation, Pro Juventute, Savera Foundation, Bundesjugendvertretung, Kinder- und Jugendanwaltschaft Wien, United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies, UN Environment Programme, Federal Ministry Republic of Austria European and International Affairs, Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations]

Background on the event (one paragraph)

This virtual side event was organized in order to create a platform where children and young people can voice their ideas, concerns, and solutions, thereby strengthening their role as active participants in shaping our global future. This event did consider in particular, recent developments around children's rights and the environment, including General Comment No. 26 on Children's Right and the Environment with a Focus on Climate Change (CRC GC26) and other existing UN Framework and Conventions relating to Human Rights and the Environment, and reflected on how the Pact for the Future and related documents can be implemented in line with the UNCRC and the CRC GC26.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The Impact of the Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations for children - The Pact for the Future, in its current form (Status of the document on 20.09.2024), does not fully address children's needs. The declaration for youth and future generations may recognize the value of working with youth-led organizations, but it barely mentions children. This oversight marginalizes child advocates and limits their potential to contribute meaningfully.
- Children in remote areas are often denied access to platforms where they can voice their concerns and advocate for their rights leaving needs and perspectives unheard in crucial decision-making process.

- The impact of climate change - The effects of climate change have caused a lot of changes in Kenya and seasons have changed. For example, we used to have several seasons of rain but nowadays we can go weeks and months without rain. This has caused many people to die of hunger; in other regions climate disasters have caused severe flooding which lead to the destruction of homes, schools, community centers thus preventing children from enjoying their childhood.
- The role and impact of technology - technology should help our environment and not harm it.
- Traffic is contributing much to air pollution and is also making the trip to and from school dangerous, sometimes solutions can begin with family members and friends, for instance bike-clubs or walk-clubs to school to prevent traffic during school hours.
- we should also address the protection of animals when we talk about environmental protection.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- The UN and its Member States should implement the General Comment 26 on Children's Right and the Environment with a Focus on Climate Change (CRC GC26)
- Acknowledge children and young people as agents of change - child activists must be empowered and feel safe to speak up. Their voices are as essential as any adult's, especially in international arenas like the Summit of the Future. However, even the consultation processes intended for children have often been inaccessible. These forums were designed with youth participants in mind, not children. When children cannot participate fully, how can we ensure that their voices are genuinely represented? It's not enough to simply include children in name – the UN processes must be child-friendly, enabling them to engage meaningfully with the complex global issues that directly affect their futures
- Enforce environmental protections and act fast on environmental laws that are passed and include children for example from age 8 years in the protection of the environment – this recommendation points out that children below the age of 14 should be given adequate opportunities to get involved in environmental protection.
- With regard to the digital age and the environment, it is essential to address e-waste and promote sustainable tech practices. Additionally, promoting inclusivity in access to technology is crucial, to work toward solutions that are both environmentally responsible and equitable for all children.
- Invest in climate resilience, disaster preparedness, and sustainable practices, recognizing children's heightened vulnerability to environmental challenges, and advocate for child-centered policies that empower and protect them in all aspects of development (a comprehensive approach to safeguard vulnerable children by ensuring access to quality education, healthcare, and social protection, while promoting mental health support and equitable access to essential resources)
- Implement the recommendations made by children during Voluntary National Reviews of the SDGs.

Webpage to find more information: <https://www.dka.at/en/unsummitofthefuture>