

Statement on behalf of 67¹ members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs and 2² aligning countries on the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future (to be delivered on 6 February 2024 during the First reading)

Co-facilitators, distinguished colleagues, ladies, and gentlemen,

On behalf of 67 members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs, we welcome this Zero Draft on the Pact for the Future. We commend the co-facilitators' for their commitment to articulate a vision of an international system that can address the challenges of today and tomorrow.

We particularly welcome the reaffirmation of the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Chapter 4, as well as the multiple references to Children's Rights and their distinct needs throughout the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future. It is imperative that we do not lose these references throughout our negotiations in the coming months as the final text of the Pact must be inclusive of all children. They are the future custodians of the planet and, will be greatly impacted by any and all decisions we make today.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind that children are a group of distinct rights holders under international law, separate from 'youth' and 'young people' for which there are

¹ Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, European Union* (observer), Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Korea (Republic of), Lesotho, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay

² Cyprus, Czechia

no universally agreed international definition in terms of age. Children are also distinct from ‘future generations’, which designates individuals yet to be born, and therefore does not include children today.

We would also welcome the explicit mention of children under Chapter 1, “Sustainable Development and Financing for Development”. Timely and fully resourced investments in children and children’s rights are critical to setting present and future generations on a trajectory for success. Further, we would like to highlight that children cannot be left out of conversations on the reform of the multilateral system in Chapter 5, “Transforming Global Governance”. Any reform to global governance must focus on eliminating discrimination while promoting inclusive, meaningful, and safe participation in all United Nations decision-making processes, especially on issues that affect the lives of children. Children are well-placed to anticipate the evolving challenges and opportunities for the future. They can ensure that strategies and solutions are not only responsive to current needs, but also forward-looking and adaptable for generations to come.

Co-facilitators and Colleagues, this year marks the 35th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and while this an important milestone, it will take place during one of the most volatile and unstable periods since World War II. Children have been the least responsible for this situation, yet they bear the heaviest burden of climate crises, conflict, and displacement. With this in mind, let us commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by reaffirming our commitments to children. Children’s rights are human rights, and they must be honored and protected as we envision the future and world that they will inherit.

In conclusion, we extend our sincere gratitude to the co-facilitators and their staff for continuing to ably lead this process. The Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs will submit our written inputs by the 12 February deadline. We stand ready to continue supporting negotiations to make this Pact for the Future inclusive of all children.

Thank you.