

**Joint statement on behalf of 71 members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs¹
at the 2023 High-Level Political Forum**

Excellency,

I am pleased to address the High-level Political Forum on behalf of 71 members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs.

Seven years ago, we set forth on a mission by way of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs to create a better world for current and future generations. The 2030 Agenda has a clear vision: *“A world which invests in its children, a world in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation, girls enjoy full gender equality, and children are provided with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities.”*

As we take stock of the implementation of the first half of the 2030 Agenda and discuss how to change the arc and accelerate progress towards these ambitious goals, we must do so through a child rights lens. Children’s rights cannot be realized without the full implementation of the SDGs and vice-versa.

Our world has changed drastically since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, leaving a **profound impact on the lives, wellbeing and fulfilment of the rights of the child**. Without urgent action, we will not deliver on our promise to create a better and more just world for our children and our children’s children.

Excellency,

Today’s children are tomorrow’s adults. How we **prioritize their rights and needs** has a profound impact not only during their lifetime but on that of future generations. Transforming our world for the better starts with **investing in children**.

To fully implement the 2030 Agenda and accelerate progress on commitments made in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, we need transformative changes on safeguarding and expanding public social spending for children, particularly across early childhood development, education, health, nutrition and social protection.

We must get children out of poverty: 1.2 billion children living in multi-dimensional poverty is inexcusable and undermines our commitment to build sustainable, productive societies. We must protect our children: with 68 million children un- and under vaccinated from preventable lethal diseases, we are failing to do all we can to ensure our children’s survival. Wasting – one of the most severe forms of malnutrition – still persists at alarming rates. And if we continue on the current trajectory, there will still be a gap of 40 million malnourished children before the 2030 target is reached.

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

We must also create the opportunities for children to thrive. Over 84 million children are estimated to be out of school and, on the current trajectory, 300 million children will leave school unable to read or write in 2030. The ability of children to survive and thrive is particularly undermined in fragile contexts. In short, we are failing in our promise to leave no one behind.

We must also identify new and innovative financing modalities and mechanisms, building inclusive and effective partnerships. While government budgets remain the key source for social spending, innovative financing modalities can bridge the fiscal gaps and deliver up to scale to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda. We must support strategies that mobilize public, private and international resources towards child rights and advance the well-being of children. As such, we must formulate and mobilize effective, equitable and transparent budgets for children, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Transforming our world for the better includes **promoting the full and meaningful participation of children and young people** in the implementation and the review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Participation means that every child learns about the SDGs, is inspired to take action in their communities and their voices are taken into account during consultations.

The SDGs must be delivered *for and with* all children. The 2030 Agenda brought together the economic, social and environmental pillars of development, thereby providing a framework for progress that can be achieved when all parts of society, including children, work together. This includes a commitment to upholding children's human rights.

We are confident that, by working together, we can truly change the arc of SDG implementation and achievement ***for*** children. It is only by putting children's rights at the heart of the SDGs, that we can create a world that is truly worthy of our children.

I thank you.
