

Speaking Points

Putting Children at the Heart of the 2030 Agenda

Statement by Najat Maalla M'jid

Opening of High-level Political Forum

09:00 -10:00 Tuesday, 9 July 2019

Conference Room 4

- Acknowledge the invitation of the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Inga Rhonda King to the SRSG-VAC mandate to make an opening address to the High-level Political Forum.
- Note that all the SDGs reviewed at the HLPFs over the last four years are of relevance to children because the vision of the 2030 Agenda is to create with them the “world that we want” now and in the future.
- But the 2019 HLPF is of very special relevance because the SDGs under review – notably SDGs 4, 8, 10 and 16 - directly affect the realization of the rights of children to the best start in life, an education of good quality and a childhood free from violence, abuse and neglect, while ensuring that no child is left behind.
- Indeed, we can call this “the children’s HLPF!”
- 2019 is a milestone year in moving towards the ambitious vision of 2030 Agenda as it marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Convention enshrines the right of all children to reach their full potential, free from violence, neglect, exploitation and abuse. Effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda will help keep that promise.
- Stress that violence has a negative impact on every aspect of development and so the 2030 Agenda treats it as a cross-cutting concern. There is a distinct target (16.2) on the elimination of all forms of violence against

children and several other key targets within SDG4, SDG5 and SDG8 deal with specific aspects of violence.

- However, from the process of reviews, including the HLPF and the Voluntary National Reviews, we see slow progress and a need for a greater sense of urgency.
 - Note that every year, millions of children endure violence in their neighbourhoods, in schools, in institutions for their care and protection, online and within their homes.
 - The physical, emotional, psychological and economic cost for victims, families and entire societies is immense.
 - Violence often starts in early childhood. As children grow it becomes a continuum, with their lives threatened by fear, pain and insecurity that undermines their health, education, development and wellbeing.

- Next week the SRSV-VAC Office will launch a new report: ***Keeping the Promise – Ending Violence against Children by 2030.***
 - Report based on contributions from all stakeholder groups: UN, regional organizations, civil society, experts and high-level advocates and children themselves.

- This new report documents positive change, lessons learned and showcases effective programmes and policies in ending violence against children. Some of the achievements highlighted in the report are:
 - Stronger legal and policy frameworks, more and better-quality data and solid evidence on what works to end violence
 - Greater coherence and coordination amongst different stakeholders working for the wellbeing of children.
 - This progress is supported by growing partnerships and coalitions, including with the most important allies of all: children themselves.
 - And there is a change in attitudes at every level, there is now a consensus that violence against children is never acceptable and can be brought to an end.

- But we must not be complacent: violence against children remains hidden and pervasive and undermines the achievement of the SDGs and full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

- Every five minutes a child dies as a result of violence.
 - Shouting, yelling or screaming are common forms of discipline for one-year-olds.
 - 300 million children between 2 and 4 years of age are victims of physical and psychological abuse.
 - Every year at least one billion children suffer some form of violence – this is half of the world’s children!
- Furthermore, there are disturbing trends and emerging challenges that threaten the gains that have been made for children, including
 - Climate change.
 - Long-term conflicts and more severe humanitarian disasters.
 - Increasing migration and the numbers of children on the move.
 - Discrimination, growing inequality and constraints in the availability of financial resources to provide quality services for children.
 - The spread of terrorism.
- Our key question is: if the costs of inaction on violence against children are so high and the solutions are known, why does it continue? What must we do to move better, faster and further in bringing it to an end?
- These key questions will be addressed at a high-level event my office is organizing next week: **“Putting Children at the Heart of the 2030 Agenda” [Tuesday 16th from 18:15-20:00 in Conference Room 8]**
 - Event will have speakers representing children, governments, civil society and the UN system
 - We will explore what more needs to be done to accelerate progress in implementation of the child-centered SDGs and reach the 2030 Agenda vision.
 - All are welcome to join and share their perspectives.
- In closing, highlight that the **Secretary-General** provided a powerful foreword to our new Report **“Keeping the Promise”**.
- In his foreword, the Secretary-General stresses that violence against children is not inevitable. He emphasizes that by placing children at the heart of the

2030 Agenda, and at the centre of all we do, we can realize its ambitious vision, while leaving no child behind.

- Call on everyone to join the Secretary-General in his powerful call. We must make sure that we keep children uppermost in our discussions at the HLPF this week.
- The SDG Summit in September must also keep children front and center and lead to accelerated action in 2020 and beyond for the realization of the right of every child to survival, development and protection.