



### Side-event

## **We Can Prevent Violence against Children: Achieving Targets to Prevent Violence against Girls and Boys in the Sustainable Development Goals**

Supported by the Governments of Canada, Guatemala, Japan, and Palau

New York, NY – March 23<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The year 2015 is a milestone for the international community, as it will shape the vision for the world that we want in the next 15 years and those to come. We want a world where children grow, survive and thrive; live in prosperity, are healthy, educated and free from violence in all settings.

Violence against children is preventable and can be stopped. A significant body of evidence suggests that providing parents with child-rearing strategies and techniques as well as economic support have positive effects on reported cases of child maltreatment, out-of-home placements and reports of injuries. Social mobilization and education programs have been effective to challenge harmful gender and other discriminatory norms and prevent violence. School-based interventions are effective to equip children to better protect themselves from abuse. Member States have the legal obligation to protect children and achieve law reform to end all forms of violence against children. Legislation has proven to be a good instrument in changing norms and attitudes and a turning point in a state's relationship with its youngest citizens.

As Governments gather at the United Nations for the third session of negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, the Governments of Canada, Guatemala, Japan, and Palau hosted a side-event entitled **"We Can Prevent Violence against Children: Achieving Targets to Prevent Violence against Girls and Boys in the Sustainable Development Goals."** The side-event was an opportunity to highlight the need for the post-2015 development agenda to secure a

commitment to fostering children's growth and development in a violent-free environment, and a vision of a society based on the premise that conflict can be resolved peacefully.

The event took place on the 23<sup>th</sup> of March 2015, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and was co-organized with ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages International, UNICEF and World Vision International, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, and the Latin America and Caribbean Movement for Children.



Two of the Government co-hosts opened the meeting with clear and strong statements of support, calling attention to the central role that the prevention of violence against children should have within the post-2015 development agenda.

H.E. Dr Caleb Otto, Permanent Representative of Palau to the United Nations, highlighted his long-term personal commitment to children's issues in his country, and highlighted bullying in schools and psychological violence in general as major issues that should be addressed. Indeed, during a consultative process on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in Palau, bullying in schools was ranked as the top concern for high-school students.

H.E. Mr Hiroshi Minami, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, recalled how violence against children is a pervasive issue throughout the world, including in Japan. He further remarked on how violence engenders violence, and highlighted the need to break this vicious cycle. "As chief negotiator for the Japanese Government, I stressed the

importance of having a target on violence against children in the Sustainable Development Goals. All these targets should be retained as they are,” he concluded.

Following, a round table was moderated by Ms Carolyn Miles, Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children US.

Maria Antonia, a 14-year-old child representative from Brazil, referred to the most common forms of violence children face, namely physical, psychological, and sexual violence, which not only occur in the community, but also in children’s own homes and schools. Maria Antonia also highlighted children’s own recommendations to prevent and respond to violence, suggesting the need to build capacity for social services in education, health, and welfare; to broaden the mechanisms at the community level for children to report cases of violence against children; and to ensure that children can actively participate, for example through children’s councils. “It is very important to improve child-friendly services within the child protection network, so that children feel confident and safe,” she added.



Mrs Laura Chiang, from the Division of Violence Prevention at the Center for Disease Control (CDC), underscored the importance of indicators and data collection tools to measure different forms of violence against children. In 1962, violence appeared for the first time in the scientific literature, and since then there has been much advancement in the way violence is analysed and measured. After its inception in 2009, ‘Together For Girls’ has been conducting surveys on violence against children in 11 countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Unlike other surveys, these are dedicated to exploring violence against children through more than 400 questions. While there is considerable variability, some striking conclusions can be reached: for example, more than 1 in 4 girls experience sexual violence before the age of 18, and 50 per cent of boys and girls experience some form of physical violence before the age of 18. “If we heard of a disease that was striking half of our children, there would be an outcry of indignation,” said Mrs Chiang.

Ms Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, through a video message remarked on the need to make commitments to expeditiously address violence against children, and highlighted the golden opportunity presented by the post-2015 process.

Ms Vianney Dong, Director of Advocacy and Communications for World Vision in the Democratic Republic of Congo, highlighted the importance of taking into account the synergy of the different actors that play a role in the protection of children from violence. “What is the role of the justice system? What is the role of the family?” she asked. “We can end violence against children, provided that everyone plays their role, from the family and the community to the UN.”

Ms Paola Pereznieta, Research Associate at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), referred to recent research on the costs and economic implications of violence against children, which was conducted with ChildFund Alliance. According to these findings, the global costs of physical, psychological and sexual violence against children can be as high as US\$ 7 trillion, which is equivalent to the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of Australia, Canada, India and Mexico combined; the global costs of the hazardous forms of child labour can amount to US\$97 billion; and the global costs of children associated with armed forces or groups can be as high as US\$144 million every year. “It is important to start talking about these huge costs and figures to bring more visibility to an issue that deserves the attention,” she said. She also highlighted the fact that prevention is a cost-effective way to address violence against children, as different evidence has amply demonstrated.

From the floor, Dr Susan Bissell, Chief of the Child Protection Unit at UNICEF, referred to the nascent multi-stakeholder global partnership on child protection, which will provide a global forum for child protection actors, as well as multi-stakeholder platform and a financial mechanism to support the prevention and response to violence against children. Dr Bissell remarked on the importance of working together alongside pathfinder countries that will lead the way forward in the years after 2015.

The remaining Government co-sponsors then proceeded to close the meeting.

H.E. Mr Guillermo Rishchynski, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, summarized the discussion, highlighting the importance of disaggregated data across the different targets of the SDGs so that the impact on children can be adequately assessed, of all the different actors working in tandem to address violence against children, and of engaging children in the decision-making processes and in their own protection –always in accordance with the CRC. He finally highlighted UNICEF’s efforts to create a global child protection partnership. “This is the missing piece,” stated Ambassador Rishchynski. “If children cannot thrive, we can have as many development agendas as we like, but we will still be poor as humanity,” he concluded.

H.E. Mr Fernando Carrera Castro, Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations, brought attention to the importance of legislation and institutions when it comes to protecting children from violence, as well as of adequate resourcing at the domestic level –for example, through fiscal policies– to finance the creation and implementation of solutions. He finally mentioned the need to develop robust indicators at the national level.

The video recording of the event can be found [here](#).