



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission for Social Development**

#### **Fifty-first session**

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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all**

### **Statement submitted by Child Helpline International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



## Statement

Child Helpline International, and its 167 child helpline members operating in 136 countries across the globe, would like to congratulate the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, for his inspiring address to youth at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. We welcome his initiative to give a voice to young people through a special representative for youth. We believe that this will be a concrete step forward in empowering children and young people around the world.

Child Helpline International is a global network of civil society and Government organizations that give a voice to children and young people. Child helplines listen to children and young people and provide counselling, protection and care to those who need it.

In October 2012, child helplines, Government representatives, civil society organizations and private sector entities met in Durban, South Africa, for the Sixth International Consultation of Child Helpline International. The theme of the International Consultation was “Strengthening child protection systems”.

At the International Consultation, child helplines and partners unanimously adopted the “Durban resolutions”, calling upon Governments, the United Nations and other key stakeholders to include the empowerment of children and young people in the post-2015 sustainable development goals.

The empowerment of people leads to poverty eradication and social integration only when the voices of the vulnerable and marginalized are heard, their needs are met and their grievances are redressed.

Child helplines empower children and young people by listening to them. In the past 10 years, child helplines around the world have received contacts from 140 million children and young people. In 2011, 14 million contacts were made with child helplines by children and young people seeking advice, counselling, care and protection. These are the numbers we are aware of, but many more have not been able to reach child helplines either because of poverty and lack of access to a telephone or other means of communication or because the child helplines are unable to provide 24-hour services owing to financial constraints. The global financial crisis has affected the resources of child helplines, and several helplines had to curtail their operations to barely a few hours a day, depriving many children and young people of the care and protection they need.

Children and young people are the building blocks of society. However, they have often been missing from the narrative on sustainable development and economic growth. Their protection and empowerment are crucial to eradicating financial and social poverty in any society and economy.

In the Durban resolutions, we urged Governments, United Nations agencies and the private sector to recognize child helplines as a unique mechanism in bringing the voices of children to bear on strengthening child protection systems. They should establish partnerships with child helplines to ensure their sustainability and accessibility to all children, free of charge; and, most importantly, to include the protection and empowerment of children and young people in the post-2015 sustainable development goals.

The experience of child helplines in counselling children and the data collected by Child Helpline International from child helplines demonstrate that the exploitation of children can have a serious impact on the sustainability of economic development.

With over 200 million children working in all forms of labour, mostly forced and involving the worst forms of labour, it is difficult to achieve equitable growth. The employment of children reduces the productive capacity of any economy and deprives adults of employment opportunities and decent work. As long as labour is treated as a market in which children are treated as commodities, dignity of work, the eradication of poverty and sustainable development will remain unattainable.

The current financial crisis has had an adverse impact on children. Millions of children from the lower economic strata of society have dropped out of school and entered the labour market to support the survival of their families. This is a phenomenon not only in the poorer countries but also in developed countries affected by the economic downturn.

In a recent report jointly published by Child Helpline International and the International Labour Organization based on data on migrant children collected by child helplines in three selected countries, it was found that, with regard to child labour, migrant children were worse off than non-migrants. The findings emphasized the need for social policies to include attention to migrant child labourers.

The voices of children and young people heard at helplines for over a decade underscore the need for their empowerment. They need a protected and safe environment and education to become productive members of the society and the economy in which they live.

### **Durban resolutions on the role of child helplines in child protection**

We, child helplines operating in 136 countries, uphold the child's rights to be heard and to be protected from violence. The Committee on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children have recognized child helplines' role as a key tool for the prevention of abuse and violence against children (general comments on articles 12 and 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and United Nations Study on Violence Against Children, recommendation 8).

Over the past 10 years, children and young people in need of care and protection have made more than 140 million contacts with child helplines worldwide. Child helplines listen, provide counselling, refer and, if needed, provide other services in cooperation with partner stakeholders.

Gathered in Durban, South Africa, on 19 October 2012 for the Sixth International Consultation of Child Helpline International, these child helplines resolve to ensure that every child has access to a child helpline by:

- (a) Ensuring that child helplines are available in every country in the world;
- (b) Advocating for sustainable funding for all child helplines;
- (c) Partnering with technology and communications firms to ensure that children's communication needs are met.

We call upon our partners in Governments, United Nations agencies and the private sector to:

- (a) Recognize child helplines' unique capacity to bring the voices of children to bear on strengthening child protection;
- (b) Partner with child helplines to ensure that they are sustainable and accessible to all children free of charge;
- (c) Ensure that the post-2015 sustainable development goals include the protection and empowerment of children and young people.

Therefore, we recommend that:

- (a) The voices of children and young people inform the post-2015 agenda;
  - (b) The protection, education and empowerment of young people be incorporated in the future agenda for sustainable and equitable growth;
  - (c) Governments be encouraged to support child helplines, as they are unique sources of information about the needs of children and youth.
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