

## **Celebratory launch with children worldwide: United Nations officially recognise children's right to a healthy environment**

Geneva, 18 September 2023.

Today, children across the world will come together to mark the launch of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's guidance which, for the first time, recognises children's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

This document, the »General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change« clarifies States' obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, urging both States and businesses to take decisive action against climate change and environmental pollution. In a live-broadcast session held in the United Nations Palais des Nations, Geneva, the Committee on the Rights of the Child will officially launch this highly-anticipated document.

Its presentation marks the culmination of an 18-month global, intergenerational consultation process led by the international child rights organisation Terre des Hommes and co-created with expert advisors, including 12 child advisors from across the world. Contributions from 16,331 children from 121 countries were received in the consultations, making this one of the most inclusive child participation processes in the United Nation's history.

In his speech at the launch event, Joshua Hofert, Executive Director of terre des hommes Germany, emphasises: *»Today is a good day for children - and for our planet. By recognising children's environmental rights, the Committee underscores that those responsible for climate and environmental damage violate children's rights. States must listen to children's and young people's demands. They must stop making decisions at their expense. They must take action.«*

And Child Advisor Aniva, 17, from the Pacific Islands, highlights: *»Our participation and input to the development of GC26 have been crucial. The Committee has heard directly from children and they understand how environmental harm and climate change are impacting us from a first-hand perspective. The children of the world are calling for action. We demand that governments address the climate crisis now.«*

The General Comment's creation has been welcomed by children and adults alike - its significance further underpinned by continued mass participation of children in global climate strikes and increasing examples of children seeking climate justice through the courts. As part of the official launch, versions of the General Comment created specifically for children will be published, designed to support young people of all ages to better understand their rights.

»This General Comment gives us the hope that we are going to have a part in changing how the environment is going to be protected in the present, and the future. It is us children who are fighting for our futures. If you are here to help us, if you are there to support us, we have hope for this General Comment«, says Elizabeth, a 17-year-old member of the Children’s Advisory Team, from Rwanda.

The Committee and Child Advisors will together plant a tree in the City of Geneva as part of a ceremony to commemorate the launch and symbolically mark the beginning of the General Comment’s implementation. The launch in Geneva is to be complemented by activities with children across the world, including local, national, regional and virtual celebrations which aim to amplify the General Comment and to claim the rights defined in it.

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS

The international child rights organisation Terre des Hommes acted as the official partner to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for the development of General Comment No. 26.

General Comment No. 26 can be accessed here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-26-childrens-rights-and>

More information about General Comment No. 26 can be found at: [childrightsenvironment.org](http://childrightsenvironment.org)

The opening event at the Palais des Nations will be broadcast live on the United Nations Web TV: <https://media.un.org/en/webtv/schedule/2023-09-18>

#### CONTACT

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##### **For interviews:**

Remote interviews with members of the Children’s Advisory Team (aged 11 to 17 from across 12 countries) can be arranged by contacting Katie Reid, Officer for child participation and the General Comment No. 26 at terre des hommes Germany: [k.reid@tdh.de](mailto:k.reid@tdh.de). Terre des Hommes interview partners are also available.

## **About Terre des Hommes**

Terre des Hommes International Federation is a non-governmental network of nine national member organisations working for the rights of children and equitable development with 730 projects across 67 countries. Terre des Hommes advocates for rights-based policies in all areas of children's lives.

For more information, visit [terredeshommes.org](https://www.terredeshommes.org)