

To: His Excellency António Guterres
United Nations Headquarters
New York, NY 10017



Date: 18 November 2022

Dear Secretary General,

We, who borrow the earth from our children, are already halfway through the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For the sake of present and future generations, we must be mindful that our challenges are interconnected and can only be addressed through strong intergenerational partnerships. **As a global community of children, young people and adult allies, working together in the [#CovidUnder19](#) initiative, we feel bound to raise our concerns that the UN is talking about the future but children are often not part of these discussions.**

Children in their full diversity comprise one-third of the world's population, with an estimated 1.3 billion more expected to join our planet by 2030. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to consider childhood and children's rights as defining characteristics of future generations. **Children around the world have already risen to the challenge.** This includes the 4 million children who, in 2019, protested peacefully and advocated for children's rights in the context of the climate crisis. Children have contributed to global awareness about the climate crisis by encouraging climate literacy, lobbying for climate-oriented curricula in schools and working to establish safe spaces for meaningful participation. This has often been particularly challenging for children already facing the greatest adversity – including those in situations of poverty, violence, abuse and exploitation; children on the move; children in contact with justice systems; and children with chronic health conditions.

Children have a critical role to play in shaping an equitable and just future for current and future generations. This is a familiar message, heard already in the UN's [mainstreaming children's rights across the UN system](#), a number of Human Rights Council Resolutions, and the [2021 Joint Statement by Heads of UN Entities](#).

Mr Secretary-General, your work as leader of the UN has reiterated that human rights are key to resolving the long-term social and political consequences of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Your report, [Our Common Agenda](#), speaks of "a new social contract anchored in human rights" to build back better after Covid. Also, in 2021, you highlighted the lack of a system-wide approach to child rights in the UN. We have also read [here](#) about your own personal commitment to considering children's views about the future.

Despite these points, we observe that in many areas of Our Common Agenda, **children are invisible**. There is no mention of children in either of the two Resolutions that set in motion the key components of this agenda: the **Resolution on the Establishment of a UN Office on Youth** ([A/Res/76/306](#)) and the **Resolution on the Modalities of the Summit of the Future** ([A/Res/76/307](#)). Children's invisibility in these flagship initiatives suggests that the commitments to mainstream children's rights across the UN are quickly falling off the radar. These silences suggest children's specific and distinctive needs and rights are being excluded from thinking about the future. Failing to include children will not only compromise children's right to be heard, as enshrined in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Child, but undermine other rights in the Convention and the SDGs as well. Some rights will end up being ignored, or even taken away.

Shouldn't the UN and the international community consider children as stakeholders and give them serious consideration in all conversations about the present and the future?

We would have liked to request the amendment of the above General Assembly resolutions to include children. However, we prefer to take note of this instance of silence and instead use our energies to look forward.

Therefore we, the signatories of this letter, call upon you, as Secretary-General, to ensure that children are duly and explicitly mentioned and included in all the subsequent documentations and processes related to the Our Common Agenda, including the UN Youth Office, the Summit of The Future and the Digital Compact. Every aspect of the Agenda affects children of today and tomorrow, and we demand inclusive participation of children in all of them. We believe that this will help Governments meet their human rights promises and set an example at the highest level to UN Member States.

At our level, through networks of children and young people supported by civil society organisations, we will continue to work towards our vision of a world where children's human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled - a world where governments champion children's human rights, and children are systematically provided with spaces to have their voices heard and be given due weight.

At #CovidUnder19, we continue to strive to link global and local child rights-based and child-led advocacy, to inspire regional, national, international and global movements of children who are empowered to claim their rights and hold adults accountable to them. With our adult allies, we will continue to co-create child-friendly resources with children, as a cornerstone of meaningful intergenerational participation in decision-making for current and future generations.

Today, as we mark the occasion of International Children's Day 2022, we invite you, honourable Secretary-General, to join our adult allies in standing alongside children and young people who seek transformative change. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely Yours,

The #CovidUnder19 Initiative

This statement was co-authored by children, young people, and adults involved in #CovidUnder19 and endorsed by: ChildFund Alliance; Child Rights Coalition Asia; Child Rights Connect; Child Rights International Network (CRIN); CWIN Nepal; the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures (University of Strathclyde); the International Institute for Child Rights and Development; International Young Catholic Students; Lakshyadeep; Learning for Well-being Foundation; Mtoto News; Nepal Youth Network for Sustainable Development; Terre des hommes International Federation; the Trust for Sustainable Living; Voice of Children Nepal.

