PRESS RELEASE

United Nations representative and children unite to advocate for fulfilling children’s rights and ending violence

Extraordinary moment for child participation on the fringes of the Human Rights Council

(New York / Geneva), March 11th, 2022 –

In a historic moment, on 12 March 2022, Dr. Najat Maalla M’jid, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, will be reporting to children about her work over the past year to end violence against children. Children will moderate and ask questions while Dr. M’jid listens to their views and reacts.

For the first time since the establishment of the mandate in 2009, a child-friendly version of the Special Representative’s report to the Human Rights Council was prepared, in close cooperation with children and young people, providing children with information and resources they might need for coming up with questions and future advocacy activities.

Over 1,000 children from across the world are expected to gather for this online event, which marks a very important milestone in child rights and participation. The virtual event emphasizes the importance of working with children as key agents of change in preventing and eliminating violence against children and receiving feedback from those who are the most affected by the phenomenon. This ground-breaking moment is reflective of the importance of meaningfully involving children in decisions taken by duty bearers, as mentioned in Article 12 of the UN Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The event is co-organised by the World Organisation of the Scout Movement, Child Rights Connect, Terre des hommes and #CovidUnder19, which is an interagency initiative supported by many other civil society organisations across the world.

By providing a child-friendly space during the Human Rights Council, the event is also an opportunity for children and young people from around the world to have their voices heard and for adults to realize their central role in fulfilling children’s rights. It is also an opportunity for government and civil society members to reaffirm their commitment towards the rights of children by hearing and taking their voices into account by taking this dialogue forward.

Carolina, a 17-year-old Brazilian activist, said: “Participating in an event like this is something I have been waiting for a long time. Children are finally being taken into account when influential organizations talk about issues that revolve around us and our daily lives. This webinar is an opportunity to share my views, connect with other young activists, and, hopefully, to see the start of a future full of child participation.”

Splendor, a 19-year-old from Nigeria, said “Without a doubt, this historic moment has always been one of the things children and young people globally dream of. A moment where we all have to sit around the table and have our opinions and voices spotlighted for adults to realize their central role in fulfilling our rights.”.

Najat Maalla M’jid said: “It’s not enough to say that children are actors of change: we need to treat them as such and to be accountable for our work to them. We need to provide them with safe and empowering pathways to receive information, to express themselves freely, to participate in decision-making processes. My mandate belongs to children, and I am deeply committed to amplify their voices and actions to influence change.”
In the spirit of inclusiveness, the event will also be translated into different languages including Arabic, French and Spanish to break the barriers of language and to make sure that voices of all children are included.

Those interested in the opportunity and want to witness this important moment, you can register with the URL below. The event is scheduled for March 12th, 2022 at 8 am (EST/NY time): https://tinyurl.com/yeynxtvs

The child-friendly versions of the annual report on the website of the Special Representative in six official UN languages are available online: https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/content/child-friendly-report-human-rights-council

The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children is an independent global advocate for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children. Appointed by the Secretary-General in follow up to the UN Study on Violence against Children, she acts as a bridge-builder and a catalyst of actions in all regions and in all settings where violence may occur. The mandate of the SRSG on Violence against Children is anchored in human rights standards and promotes the universal ratification and effective implementation of core international conventions.

Read more: violenceagainstchildren.un.org Follow the work of the Special Representative on Twitter: @UN_EndViolence

This press release was prepared by children and young people from the #CovidUnder19 initiative. #CovidUnder19 was launched in 2020 to understand children's views and experiences about life under Coronavirus, and amplify their voices to inform policymakers, professionals working with children, and governments. #CovidUnder19 creates spaces for children across the globe to be meaningfully involved in the discussions about children's rights and the responses to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The press release was endorsed by the following organisations : Child Rights Coalition Asia; Child Rights Connect; Defence for Children International; the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures (University of Strathclyde); the International Institute for Child Rights and Development; International Young Catholic Students; the Learning for Well-being Foundation; Save the Children International; SOS Children's Villages; Terre des hommes Foundation.

Read more: https://www.tdh.ch/en/projects/covidunder19 Follow #CovidUnder19 on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook @covidunder19

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