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To all Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York and Geneva

To His Excellency, Mr António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Re: Joint letter on cancellation of the May pre-session of the CRC

Geneva, 05 April 2024

Excellencies,

The undersigned civil society organisations working for the promotion and protection of children's rights worldwide express great concern over the cancellation of the pre-session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee), scheduled to take place from 27 to 31 May 2024, due to the UN liquidity crisis. This sets a terrible precedent, which will have a negative impact on the ability of the Committee to undertake its core work in monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) through the review of States parties in a way that allows for children, civil society, and other stakeholders to contribute to this process. We also regret that this measure will add to backlogs for future dialogue with States parties.

We join the Committee in expressing deep concern that the scheduled opportunities to consult with children, who are rights holders under the Convention, have been postponed alongside opportunities to interact with civil society representatives and UN agencies. Children and civil society representatives from the countries scheduled for the pre-session have been preparing for months to interact with the Committee. Postponing the pre-session will have a clear impact on their future ability to engage. The postponement, announced just days before child and civil society submissions were due, has also resulted in disruptions and squandered efforts by all, and in frustrations for children who now feel discouraged rather than empowered.

This measure comes after the announcement in January of the cancelling of hybrid modalities for UN human rights bodies and mechanisms just a few days before the February pre-session of the Committee was planned to take place in a hybrid format. At the time, many civil society representatives and some children were not able to interact with the Committee online for the pre-session after months of preparations.

In the context of the UN liquidity crisis, we are also concerned that the Day of General Discussion that would normally take place as part of the drafting process for the Committee's new General Comment on "Children's right to access justice and effective remedies" might be postponed or even cancelled. Given that this is one of the main opportunities for States, civil society, UN



agencies, and especially children, to interact with the Committee on emerging issues, such a step would be a further and significant setback.

These series of measures have all come at the expense of meaningful and effective engagement with civil society and participation of children. They come at a time when the work of the Committee continues to be more crucial than ever amidst the multitude of crises that disproportionately affect children in the world today, including armed conflicts, climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, growing poverty and persisting inequalities, shrinking civic space, among others. It also comes at a time when the Secretary-General, in his [Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming](#), has mandated the mobilization of the UN system to collectively strengthen and elevate a shared UN child rights agenda, including through meaningful and effective child participation.

We deeply regret that the UN liquidity crisis is impacting the overall regular functioning of the Committee, in particular the spaces for children and civil society to engage, adding to the worldwide trends of shrinking civil society space. Such measures have not only impacted the Committee, but also on the proper functioning of the treaty bodies system, the work of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN human rights mechanisms as a whole, setting a dangerous precedent.

We call on UN Member States worldwide to comply with their financial commitments to the UN by paying their fees to the UN in full and without delay so as to ensure that the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN human rights system as a whole can continue its critical work.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of our highest consideration.