

Submission by UNICEF on behalf of members of the Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI) Coalition and the Children’s Rights Climate Coalition to the UNFCCC first Global Stocktake

Organizations: Alana, Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative, Child Rights International Network (CRIN), One Ocean Hub, Our Kids Climate, Plan International, Project Dryad, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes, UNICEF, World Vision.

Introduction

The Global Stocktake (GST) referred to in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement is crucial for enhancing the collective ambition of action and support towards achieving the purpose and long-term goals of the Paris Agreement (Decision 19/CMA.1).

The UNFCCC was signed more than 30 years ago. Through the Paris Agreement, Parties agreed that States should, when taking climate action, respect, promote and consider, *inter alia*, the rights of children, as well as the principle of intergenerational equity. Yet consideration of children remains minimal or non-existent throughout the vast majority of UNFCCC workstreams, despite their acute vulnerabilities and stake in the future outcomes of present decisions.

As the Paris Agreement “report card”, the GST presents a critical opportunity to acknowledge this omission, and to “course-correct” towards achieving the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement in such a way that children’s rights, including their right to a healthy environment, are upheld.

The purpose of this submission is to request that the upcoming Technical Dialogue at SB58 in June 2023 incorporates a dedicated focus on children and young people, as a critical short-term step towards informing the GST outputs component and overcoming the omission of children in climate action.

The format for such a focus could take the form of an intergenerational dialogue, as a child- and youth-friendly element of the Technical Dialogue, focusing on the rights, needs, perspectives and capacities of children in climate action. Such a dialogue would include key stakeholders from different communities of practice, including child rights experts and young people themselves, through an inclusive, diverse and participatory process, in which children’s perspectives and concerns are effectively facilitated.

The rationale for the urgent mainstreaming of children’s rights across climate action, including relevant data, metrics and recommendations with respect to the concrete measures and targets required to uphold children’s rights and intergenerational equity across mitigation, adaptation, finance, and loss and damage, is set out and substantiated in a separate submission on the “approach to the consideration of the outputs component of the first global stocktake”. The Executive Summary of that submission is provided below.

Executive Summary: submission on the approach to the consideration of the outputs component of the first global stocktake

- **The climate crisis is a child rights crisis. The GST output must recognize the specific and heightened vulnerabilities of children and young people, and be informed by age- and gender-disaggregated data on climate impacts.** Children represent almost one-third of the world's population, and are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to a range of physiological and developmental factors. While stabilizing levels of greenhouse gas emissions at safe levels remains the only long-term solution to tackling climate change, the mitigation measures required are off track and will come too late for protecting children that are already experiencing unprecedented impacts. Urgent investment is required to enhance adaptation for children and communities most at risk.
- **The GST output should adopt an intersectional approach, in light of the additional risks and discrimination faced by certain children experiencing intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination and marginalization.** Such groups include girls, children discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientations, gender identities and expression (SOGIE), Indigenous children, children in peasant, small-scale and other rural communities, children with disabilities, and displaced children. Additional measures may be required to ensure that these children's rights are respected and protected in the context of climate change impacts and climate action.
- **The GST output must be strongly informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as well as the universal human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and the principle of intergenerational equity.** The UNCRC has been ratified by virtually every State in the world, in widespread recognition of the specific and heightened needs of children. Detailed forthcoming guidance from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child with respect to children's rights and climate change (General Comment No. 26), to be launched in September 2023, will further clarify the obligations of States to uphold children's rights in their implementation of climate policies and action, leading to more integrated, holistic, ambitious and equitable approaches.
- **The GST output should result in a work plan to implement a human rights-based and intersectional approach to climate action, including cross-cutting, concrete and dedicated targets that provide collective, global pathways towards protecting children's specific rights in all climate action.** Children's rights are consistently overlooked in legislation, policies, programmes and finance to address climate change, and children face extensive barriers to meaningful engagement in climate policy-making at all levels. The GST output can "course correct" this omission, and commit to targets/milestones for protecting children from the impacts of climate change, including through measures to enhance focus on, and meaningful engagement of, children and young people in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of climate action, paying particular attention to marginalized groups of children. Further details with respect to mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, finance, and inclusion/participation, are provided in this submission.
- **The GST output must put us on track to rapidly bend the curve down on emissions, including commitment to equitable phase down of all fossil fuels, in line with what the best available science tells us is necessary, while being guided by the harm prevention and precautionary principles so as to safeguard the rights of children and other groups most at risk.** Where possible, strong preference should be given to nature-based (land- and ocean-based) solutions that comprehensively support children's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, contributing to climate, environmental and sustainable development objectives essential for children's well-being.
- **The GST output must set out milestones for an enhanced focus on child-sensitive adaptation, including through the framework of the Global Goal on Adaptation.** A child-sensitive approach to adaptation:
 - ⊘ Considers the specific risks faced by children in a changing climate and ensures that children's needs, voices and capacities are central to adaptation planning and implementation, including through strengthening the climate-resilience of social services

that reach children and communities most at risk, such as water and sanitation, health, mental health and psychosocial support, education, nutrition, social and child protection services.

- ⊘ Prioritizes nature-based (land- and ocean-based) solutions that comprehensively support children's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
 - ⊘ Is locally-led and informed by the views of children and their communities, engaging children in adaptation decision-making, implementation and monitoring.
 - ⊘ Is informed by age- and gender-disaggregated data on climate impacts and adaptation benefits for children and other vulnerable groups.
 - ⊘ Strengthens data and monitoring mechanisms to track/measure the resilience of essential services as well as their contribution to building community resilience.
 - ⊘ Is coherent with relevant SDG and Sendai Framework targets, indicators, and monitoring mechanisms.
- **The GST output must embed concrete actions to ensure that children's rights are explicitly and systematically considered with respect to loss and damage, including:**
 - ⊘ The urgent implementation of effective multilateral mechanisms to address the impacts of loss and damage on children's rights, including through the Warsaw International Mechanism and the Santiago Network, and the newly-established Loss & Damage Fund, as well as clear recognition of the role for humanitarian emergency response.
 - ⊘ Commitment to ensuring that these mechanisms have the ability to deliver timely and accessible support for those most affected, at the scale required.
 - ⊘ Global agreement on a set of overarching principles for all loss and damage finance, incorporating children's and human rights, and gender equality.
 - ⊘ The provision of new, additional, public grants and needs-based finance through the new Loss & Damage Fund to address and remedy the impacts of loss and damage, to be structured and delivered in ways that are gender-transformative and which respect, protect and promote children's rights. The new Fund should establish specific policies and guidance on children's rights and safeguards in this respect.
- **The GST output should commit to enhancing child-sensitivity of climate finance, including by:**
 - ⊘ Delivering on the commitment to double adaptation finance by 2025, as a step towards meeting the estimated \$340bn required each year by 2030.
 - ⊘ Setting out steps to quantify the financial needs for, and measure existing financial flows going to, the protection and promotion of children's rights in climate action. This includes consideration of the significant adaptation costs of social sectors on which children depend and which are not currently factored into estimates of adaptation costs, as well as nature-based solutions.
 - ⊘ Setting out commitment to urgently incorporate children's rights, needs, voices and equity in the policies and guidelines of existing funds, including the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, and Global Environment Facility, and of their accountability/redress mechanisms, as well as in the development and operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund.
- **The GST output must recognize children's status as rights-holders and agents of change, and provide clear recommendations on the measures required to enhance their equitable participation in climate governance at all levels, including through:**

- Global commitment to ensure that new or existing consultation mechanisms at local, national, regional and global levels support the safe and meaningful participation of children and young people in climate-related decision-making, implementation and monitoring.
 - Global commitment to quality, inclusive environmental education.
 - Commitment to enact legislative and administrative frameworks to guarantee the rights of children to participate as well as access to justice, including by ratifying the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure.
 - Paying particular attention to ensuring safe, meaningful and effective participation of marginalized groups of children that face intersecting forms of discrimination, and who are particularly at risk of the impacts of climate change.
- Suggested targets include:
 - ⊘ Further specify the emission trajectory, with a view to meeting the reduction target of 43% by 2030, based on 2019 levels.
 - ⊘ Increase the proportion of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that are child-sensitive to 100%.
 - ⊘ 100% of new or updated National Adaptation Plans are child-sensitive.
 - ⊘ Substantially increase investment in nature-based solutions that comprehensively support children's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, contributing to climate, environmental and sustainable development objectives essential for children's well-being.
 - ⊘ Double adaptation finance by 2025, as a step towards meeting the estimated \$340bn required each year by 2030.
 - ⊘ Quantify needs for, and measure existing financial flows going to, the protection and promotion of children's rights, including consideration of adaptation costs of social sectors and for nature-based solutions.
 - ⊘ Children's rights are incorporated in the policies and guidelines of all multilateral climate funds.
 - ⊘ Significantly enhance investment in strengthening the climate-resilience of essential services for children and communities most at risk, including water and sanitation, health, mental health and psychosocial support, education, nutrition, social and child protection services.
 - ⊘ 100% of children are protected by multi-hazard early warning systems and have access to information concerning climate-related risk.
 - ⊘ All countries take steps to strengthen data and monitoring mechanisms to (i) capture age- and gender-disaggregated data on climate impacts and benefits of climate action for children and other vulnerable groups, and (ii) to track/measure the resilience of essential services, as well as their contribution to building community resilience.
 - ⊘ Effective multilateral mechanisms are in place to address the impacts of loss and damage on children and other groups most at risk, including provision of timely, adequate and accessible support for those most affected.
 - ⊘ Overarching global principles for loss and damage finance are established, incorporating children's and human rights and gender equality.
 - ⊘ The new Loss & Damage Fund provides new, additional, public grants and needs-based finance to address and remedy the impacts of loss and damage, and is structured and

delivered in ways that are gender-transformative and which respect, protect and promote children's rights.

- ∠ All countries seek to address barriers to the equitable participation of children and young people in climate governance, ensuring that new or existing mechanisms support their safe and meaningful participation in climate-related decision-making, implementation and monitoring.
- ∠ Quality, inclusive environmental education for all.