



Leaving



Violence



Against



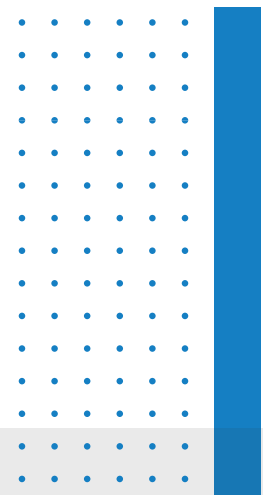
Children



Behind



Key Achievements 2023 and the Way Forward





OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Contact:

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on
Violence Against Children

Attn: Permissions

United Nations Office SRSG-VAC

304 45th Street, 17th Floor,

New York, NY, 10017, USA

srsg-vac@un.org

For the latest information, please visit: violenceagainstchildren.un.org

Social media handles:

 [UNviolenceagainstchildren](https://www.facebook.com/UNviolenceagainstchildren)

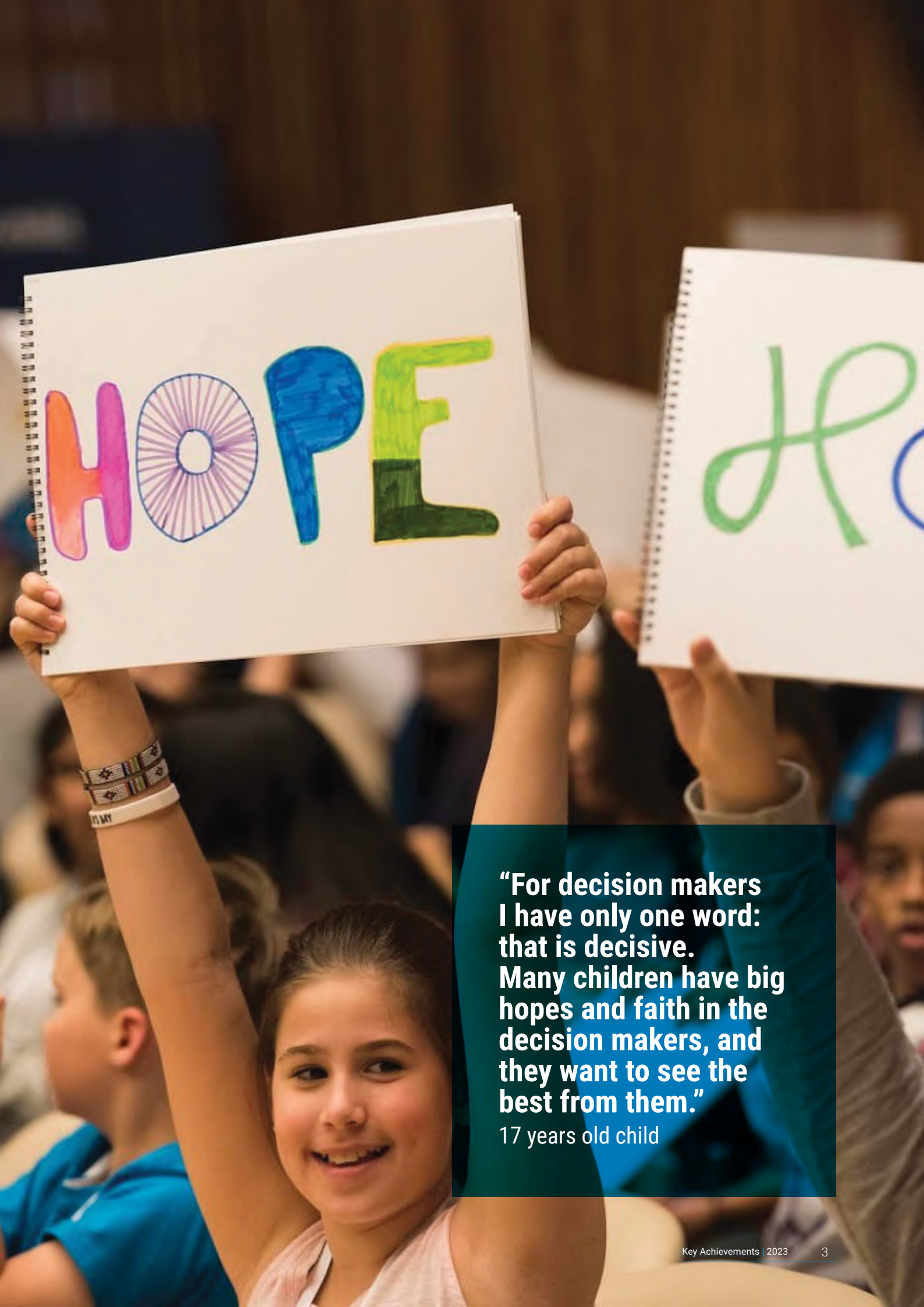
 [un_violenceagainstchildren](https://www.instagram.com/un_violenceagainstchildren)

 [UN_EndViolence](https://twitter.com/UN_EndViolence)

 [un-violence-against-children](https://www.linkedin.com/company/un-violence-against-children)

© Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on
Violence Against Children (OSRSG/VAC)

January 2024.



**“For decision makers
I have only one word:
that is decisive.
Many children have big
hopes and faith in the
decision makers, and
they want to see the
best from them.”**

17 years old child

Ending Violence Against Children Cannot Wait!

1 billion children are experiencing
1 form of violence

1 in 6

Children globally living in
extreme poverty

1 billion

Children exposed to
climate change risks which
is a 'threat multiplier' for
violence against children

43.3 million

Children displaced as a
consequence of conflict
and violence as of the
end of 2022

46,000

Children Age 10-19 end
their own lives each year

35%

Of all identified victims
of trafficking that are
children

15%

of children have
reported cyberbullying
victimization

32 million

Reports of child sexual
exploitation images were
identified by electronic
service providers

640 million

Women and girls alive
today married as a child,
that is nearly 1 girl every
3 second

200 million

Girls and women alive
today have undergone
female genital mutilation
(FGM)

160 million

Children exposed to child
labor

1 million +

Children are deprived of
liberty

240 million

Children have some form of
disability. They are twice as
likely to face neglect and/or
sexual, physical or mental
abuse

Strategic Direction

Vision

All children live free from violence.

Mission

Collaborative, evidence-based advocacy and mobilization at the global, regional and national levels to end violence against children, achieving the implementation of Agenda 2030 and Our Common Agenda.

Approach

Integrated and systemic, child- and gender-sensitive, inclusive and participative.

Goals



Ending
Violence
Against
Children is
possible if

1

Accelerated implementation of Agenda 2030.



2

Children involved in decision making processes and empowered as agents of change.



3

Sustained investment in cross-sectoral services for children and their caregivers.



4

Greater attention given to the issue of violence against children and gender-based violence.



Ensuring Effectiveness

Strategic direction:

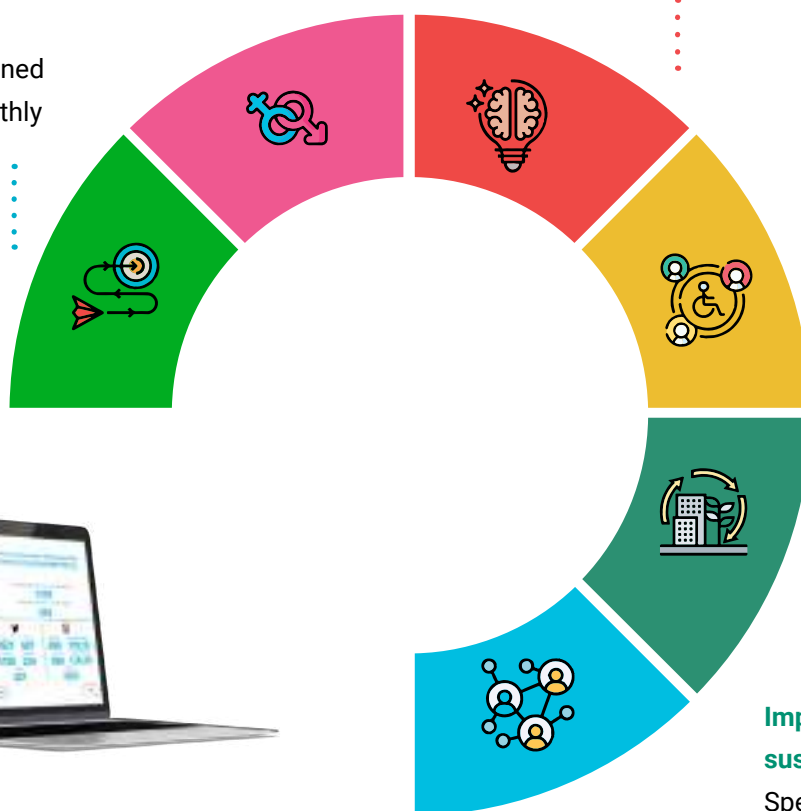
The Special Representative adopted a three-year strategy for the mandate's work (2022-2024). To monitor the Office of the Special Representative's reach and impact, the Special Representative has put in place a performance management dashboard tracking the achievement of key indicators, underpinned by a system of monthly data collection.



Gender: Addressing gender discrimination and harmful social norms, as well as the connections between violence against women and violence against children, has been a crucial element of the Special Representative's advocacy.

Innovation and partnerships: The Special Representative has continued to raise awareness of frontier issues in ending violence against children with children and through partnerships with States, UN entities, civil society, academia, and the private sector.

Disability: In line with the principle of leaving no child behind, the promotion of measures to ensure the rights, dignity and protection of children with disabilities - especially in the context of de-institutionalization - has continued to be a key strand of the mandate's work.



Enhancing capacity, cooperation and coordination: With other relevant mechanisms such as the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict continue expanding and mutually reinforcing.

Improving sustainability: The Special Representative has increased the use of online means to support remote participation in advocacy opportunities and consolidated travel within regions to reduce the need for travel.

Key Achievements 2023

Wide mobilization on many fronts

The Special Representative met with **2200 children** in person or online including through **8 dialogues** across all regions.

Conducted **9 country visits and follow-up engagements**: Andorra, Fiji, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Thailand and follow-up visits and dialogues in Iceland, Morocco, Lebanon, Chad and Côte d'Ivoire.

Engaged with all types of stakeholders through **289 in person and online meetings**.

Participated in **74 high-level conferences and other advocacy opportunities** to ensure that ending violence against children is fully integrated in local, national, regional and global policies and plans related to all forms of violence and its drivers.

Launched a **communication campaign on Protecting the Rights of Children on the Move** in Time of Crisis mobilizing 6 Head of UN Agencies and Spanish actress Penelope Cruz.

Held the first meeting of the **Protection Through Online Participation Initiative in Madrid** on children's online access to protection with more than 28 organizations and ICT sector partners.



Conducted **1 poll on children's perception of online risks** together with WeProtect Global Alliance yielding 700 responses.

Reached out to all 38 Member States - and one regional organization - that presented their VNRs in 2023 mobilizing for increase attention to violence against children and children's participation in the process.

Made a pledge during the **75th Anniversary of the Human Rights Declaration** stressing the importance of acting better and faster for children's protection and well-being. At the **Global Refugee Forum** a pledge was also made on enhancing protection of displaced children.



Published child-friendly versions of HRC & GA reports with children on digital environment and on travel and tourism. High-level advocacy event organized with the support of HM Queen Silvia of Sweden and DSG Amina Mohammed.



Investing in Children Makes Economic Sense and Serves as an SDG Accelerator



The investment case for ending violence against children is a key dimension for the achievement of all the SDGs. In addition to the human cost, violence against children has high economic costs:

- National studies from a range of countries have estimated that violence against children has economic costs of up to 5% of GDP.
- Violence against children undermines investments in health, education and other social services.
- Spending on integrated approaches to ensuring child protection and wellbeing is a sound investment with a high return.

The Special Representative has facilitated peer-learning exchanges between officials in different States on how to assess returns on investment in integrated services to ensure children’s protection and well-being. Documentation of good practices and guidance to undertaking such assessments also continued.

Supported by a cooperation agreement with Iceland, the Special Representative has engaged with States across all regions on the investment case for ending violence against children, including Cabo Verde, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Fiji, Jamaica, Kenya, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Morocco, the Philippines, Senegal and the Solomon Islands.



DECADE OF ACTION



The Special Representative continued her high-level engagement with Member States to support their implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Using the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process as an entry point to identify and report on promising practices and initiatives to tackle violence against children, the mandate:

- Developed and shared a suite of guidance materials and tools.
- Met with 33 Member States and the European Union presenting their voluntary reviews.
- Mobilized the United Nations system at the country level to help ensure relevant technical support to the VNR process.

At the invitation of Member States, the Special Representative participated in regional and national policy dialogues, jointly hosted high-level advocacy activities, and joined national VNR preparation processes to strengthen child protection policies and mechanisms at national level, as well as promoting the involvement of children in decision-making processes. At the High-Level Political Forum and the SDG Summit, the Special Representative stressed the need to continue strengthening the protection of children from violence as a crucial component of achieving the SDGs.

Wide Mobilization at Various Levels

Global Level

The Special Representative continued to advocate for greater investment in child protection and wellbeing. Key advocacy moments included SDG Summit, High-Political Level Forum, the Global Refugee Forum, the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the preparations for the Summit of the Future, including the consultation process for the Global Digital Compact.

Collaboration with the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict; on Sexual Violence in Conflict and with the Youth Envoy and Envoy on Tech continued expanding. On 23 February 2023, the Special Representative addressed the Security Council alongside the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, stressing the need to incorporate child protection into efforts to prevent and end conflicts and facilitated the participation of a youth leader in the discussion.

Cooperation and coordination with the UN family expanded. The Special Representative participated actively in the United Nations system-wide guidance note on the mainstreaming of children's rights. Under the Inter-Agency Working Group on Ending Violence Against Children and the UN Task Force on children deprived of liberty, both chaired by her, high advocacy coordinated efforts were facilitated for strengthened protection of children on the move in times of crisis as well as for alternatives to deprivation of liberty.

The Special Representative together with IOM continued co-chairing the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT), integrating child protection as a cross-cutting theme. The close cooperation with ITU for a safer and more protective digital environment continues serving to engage key partners around this critical challenge. The Special Representative and the Executive Director of UNODC launched a joint strategy and action plan on ending violence against children.

Engagement with relevant stakeholders such as national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and faith-based organizations and communities continues being key. The Special Representative addressed the annual thematic conference of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions on their role in protecting at-risk children and marginalized children from deprivation of liberty, torture and other ill-treatments.

Regional Level

The SRSG has continued to strengthen collaboration with regional and subregional organizations, including through her participation in high-level advocacy opportunities, the provision of technical support and guidance and the creation of connections between organizations in different regions. The SRSG has, for example, promoted the need for investment in integrated, cross-sectoral services for children and families in her engagements with the Council of Europe and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Building and strengthening child protection systems has been a central theme of the Special Representative's engagement with the European Union, including in the context of her participation in a high-level meeting in June 2023 dedicated to the European Union support for the reconstruction and reform of the child protection system of Ukraine, the safe return of children, and family reunification.

The need to tackle the drivers of and demand for child trafficking and criminal trafficking networks has been a further important dimension of the Special Representative's advocacy and support for regional and subregional organizations, including the Economic Community of West African States. She has continued to promote the need to incorporate child rights and child protection into action to combat the climate crisis. Amplifying the voices and involvement of children in regional processes and mechanisms has been another crucial dimension of the work of the Special Representative, as highlighted by her support for the *Movimiento Mundial por la Infancia de Latinoamérica y El Caribe* and for the first Africa Children's Summit in April 2023.



Country Level



Country visits continued providing key opportunities to engage with key stakeholders in a participatory way to enhance understanding of national and local child protection mechanisms; identify good practices for scale-up and actions to overcome challenges; and define the expertise and support needed to ensure children’s protection and well-being. In 2023, the Special Representative has visited Andorra, Fiji Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Senegal, Solomon Islands, and Thailand. Visits to Iceland, Morocco and Lebanon were welcome opportunities to follow up on previous visits. In addition, she continues to engage bilaterally with High level officials as per the follow up of previous country visits like with Chad and Côte d’Ivoire.

During her visits, the Special Representative met Heads of State and Government, ministers, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, officials and national authorities responsible for children’s protection and well-being, children and young people, civil society and faith-based organizations, traditional and community leaders, members of the donor community, United Nations Resident Coordinators, and United Nations Country Teams. She also visited a range of social services for children, as well as care institutions and places of detention.

The Special Representative welcomed high-level political commitments during all her visits to investment in children’s protection and well-being and advocated for their translation into concrete action.



More Commitments to Alternatives to Deprivation of Liberty

Under the leadership of the SRSG, the United Nations Task Force on Children Deprived of Liberty worked closely with Member States and other relevant stakeholders to end all forms of deprivation of liberty of children, leading to a joint pledge to support the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, including specific steps to end immigration detention.

The UN Task Force submitted a contribution to the UNMN workstream on GMC indicators co-lead by IOM and UN DESA to support the inclusion of a specific core indicator to end child immigration detention in the set of indicators requested by Member States in the paragraph 70 of the 2022 IMRF Progress Declaration to monitor the implementation of the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. Furthermore, the UN Task Force has finalized an advocacy brief that compiles positive examples on alternatives to children's immigration detention and sets up policy actions to end the immigration detention of children.



Advocacy Brief on End Immigration Detention of children

Protection Through Online Participation

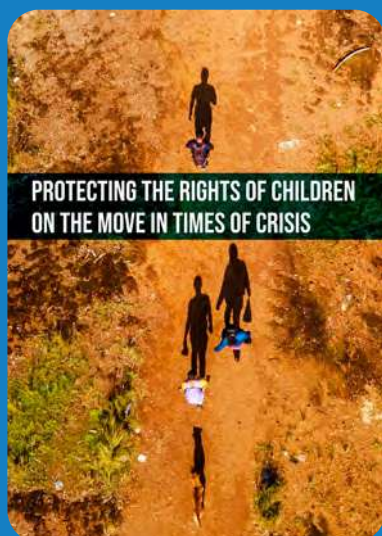


The online environment exposes children to various risks which must be tackled, but it also is **an innovative opportunity for children to access safety and protection when exposed to or at risk of any form of violence, whether online or offline.**



To better understand this, the Special Representative created PoP - Protection through online participation in collaboration with the International Telecommunications Union. **PoP collected information from online services functioning in almost 100 countries around the types of technologies used, the forms of violence addressed, and the benefits and challenges of using digital technologies to provide protection. Information was also collected directly from Tech companies and platforms used by children.** Results revealed that tech companies had noticed this behavior in their platforms as children increasingly seek ways **to connect with safety and protection through multiple digital means.**

Providing Guidance on Key Thematic Issues



Protecting the Rights of children on the move in times of crisis



A safer digital environment for children: Now is the time to act



Rethinking travel and tourism: Placing child protection at the core of sustainable travel and tourism

Children are Part of the Solution

Promoting a Culture of Meaningful Participation

The Special Representative promotes the culture of meaningful participation across all her actions, including periodically reporting to children on the margins of both the HRC and the GA. The Special Representative connected with children active on specific issues, in order to inform them and also gather their thoughts for her presentation to both bodies. The Special Representative also joins children in their initiatives and engages with them during her country missions and during various events in different regions.



Child-friendly version of the report to the GA: Risks of violence against children in travel and tourism



Children's messages at the UNGA High-Level side event on Placing Child Protection at the Core of Sustainable Travel and Tourism



Children's message during margins of the HRC on: A Safer Digital Environment for Children: Now is the Time to Act!



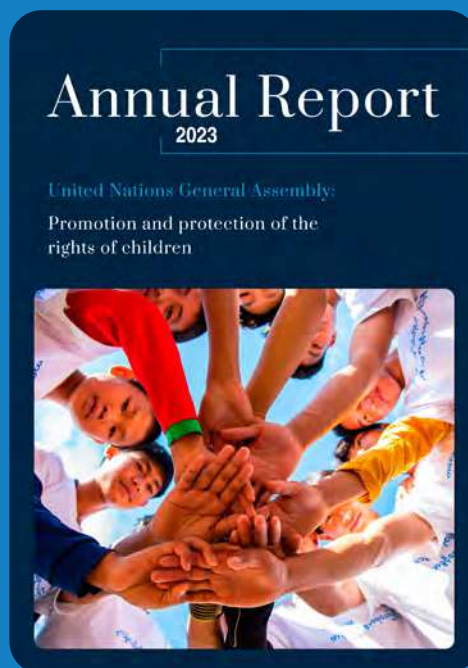
Child-friendly version of the report to the HRC: Violence Against Children and the digital environment

In one word, what is the most important ingredient to end violence against children





OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



Learn more about the achievements and key initiatives from 2023 in the annual report



@UN_EndViolence



@un_violenceagainstchildren



@UNviolenceagainstchildren