The Asia-Pacific Regional Group

High level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on
the 25th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Statement
by
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the Asia-Pacific Regional Group

New York, 20th November 2014
Mr. President,

I have the distinct honour to make this statement on behalf of the 54 member states of the Asia-Pacific Regional Group, all of whom have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We thank you for convening today's meeting to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention; and thank Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Executive Director Anthony Lake for their thoughtful statements.

On this occasion, we congratulate Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi for jointly winning the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize for their outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of children's rights.

At age 17, the courageous and committed Malala has become the youngest recipient of Nobel Peace Prize and a global icon for the right to education. Kailash is the architect of the single largest civil society network against the exploitation of children, and has devoted his entire life to this cause.

We salute both of them and support the sublime causes they espouse and advocate.

Mr. President,

Today is a historic day. As we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the CRC, we have a good opportunity to review the progress made so far and identify challenges that lie ahead.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the CRC coincides with the culmination of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and an intense process to craft the post-2015 Development Agenda, based on sustainable development goals. The rights of the child sit at the very center of all these processes.

Children are the most precious asset of mankind and the builders of its future. Investment in children is not just smart economics, but a compelling moral obligation and a global common good.
The landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child has brought us thus far to make this world safe and secure for children, without discrimination. The Convention and its two Protocols have stimulated significant progress in the normative structure and practical outcomes to improve the quality of the lives of children.

Let’s first look at the successes.

In the past twenty-five years, Under Five mortality has been halved. New HIV infections among children have declined, and the number of out of school children has been reduced by half.

There has been a decrease in the child labour among boys and girls. Violence against children and other harmful practices against them have gained greater awareness among governments and societies. The CRC has inspired member states to enact new laws and improve existing mechanisms to protect the rights and interests of children.

Now let’s look at glass half full.

To fully protect children’s rights, we have a long way to go. As we speak, approximately 57 million children are not enrolled in primary schools, and 69 million are out of secondary schools. Nearly 700 million children face extreme poverty. Some 168 million children are engaged in child labour. Under-nutrition remains a major challenge causing stunting, disease and death of children living in the developing countries.

Children constitute more than half of the global refugee population. Millions are caught in conflict and many fall victim to sexual abuse.

The member states of the Asia-Pacific Group underscore the need for a determined push and concerted efforts to redress these remaining deficits and overcome challenges in the next fifteen years. We should start early and accelerate our speed to achieve our objectives. Priorities should be elimination of poverty, promotion of education and health, and holistic development of children.
Mr. President,

The Group stresses the need to include sufficient, tangible and credible means of implementation for the effective and full realization of all child-related goals and targets. In this regard, the Addis Ababa conference on Financing for Development should pay special attention to resources for children.

All sustainable development goals, particularly those linked with the rights of the children should be given special attention in terms of provision of adequate financial resources.

Let me reiterate the firm and abiding commitment of the Asia-Pacific Group to the principles of the CRC and to the full realization of the rights of the child.

The Group will support efforts of the UNICEF and the United Nations as a whole to maintain a sharp focus on the rights of the children in the emerging post-2015 Development Agenda and beyond.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child promises full and healthy growth and development of all children all over the world. Let us work to fulfill that promise; and let us celebrate that the CRC builds our resilience to pursue this goal.

I thank you.