

**Human Rights Council
16th Session
28 February -25 March 2010**

Thank you Mr President.

This statement is delivered on behalf of Plan International, World Vision International, Defence for Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, The International Catholic Child Bureau, the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Community and Family Services International, International Federation Terre des Hommes, The World Movement of Mothers, International Federation Terre des Hommes, Women's World Summit Foundation and the NGO Group for the CRC.

Birth registration is a fundamental human right enshrined in Articles 7 and 8 of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which gives every child the right to be registered at birth, to have an identity including nationality and name, and to be protected from being stateless by the State within whose jurisdiction she/he is born.

The causes of street involvement are complex, multi-faceted, context-specific and personal, and operate at all levels. It is now thought that the experience of violence is one of the key triggers that precipitate some children from poor and disadvantaged families, and not others, to separate from their families and move onto the streets.

The children most at risk are those who are out of school, who work in exploitative and hazardous labour, who experience violence or who migrate in unsafe circumstances. Children belonging to these populations often do not have birth certificates. They form part of the global estimate that around 51 million children a year are not registered at birth. Every third child!

Birth registration serves as a prerequisite to the realization of other human rights integral to a child's development and well-being. Unregistered children represent one of the most vulnerable groups facing abuse, exploitation and risk entering into conflict with the law.

In short, children without proof of legal existence are invisible to the authorities and do not appear in population censuses or public health statistics. They are therefore not reached by government services

Comprehensive national child protection systems need to include mechanisms to integrate the rights of children working and living on the streets and include birth registration as a protection tool.

Mr. President, We call on all States to:

- Take every possible measure to ensure that birth registration is available and accessible to all children. It should be free of charge and without fines for late registry to their population without any discrimination, including special attention to marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities, refugees, internally displaced, stateless, and street children.

- To develop or amend civil registration laws and enable access to registrars to ensure birth registration for all children and access to nationality for all persons within their territory, together with allocating sufficient funds to the registration system.
- To raise awareness on the importance of birth registration at local, district, national and international level.
- To address issues that serve as a deterrent to registering children such as complex administration procedures, local traditions and geographical barriers.
- To acknowledge the importance of birth registration not only for every boy and girl child, but also for the State. An effective birth registration system helps provide national disaggregated data to ensure delivery of services, prevention and intervention measures for children, including those who end up working and living on the streets.
- Birth registration must be integrated into national development plans of action or poverty reduction strategy papers, and registration data must be integrated into national statistic systems.

Thank you,