

Oral Statement
Children as equal actors in civil society

Mr President,

A strong and independent civil society is essential to promote and hold states to account for the realization of children's rights in both development and humanitarian contexts. This is only possible when there is a wide range of civil society actors, including children, which are able to act freely. But legal, administrative and other restrictions have reduced opportunities for adults and children to undertake a range of public actions.

In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, civil society should also be a space for children. Children's capacity to influence on their own terms is largely dependent on the extent to which their civil rights and freedoms are being met.

As part of their civil rights and freedoms, children have the right to freedom of expression. Without access to timely, appropriate and child-friendly public information, children cannot express informed opinions, meaningfully take part in decision-making and claim their rights.

Children also have the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, but children often encounter a number of challenges in forming their own organizations, including registering these organizations. Governments should ensure that the legal framework is conducive to the establishment of child-led organizations, allocate budgets for their functioning and create spaces within decision-making processes for these associations.

Governments can build on emerging good practices on how to involve children. With the support from Save the Children, the Kenyan Government has created the Children's Assembly with structures in all 47 counties, providing a mechanism for children to engage in policy-making from the local to the national level¹. In Bangladesh, the child-led National Children's Task Force

¹ Save the Children (2013), Impact on Child Rights Governance

with 20.000 members is providing children the space to engage in a range of activities, including monitoring of service delivery to children².

Children can be effective agents of change, securing genuine improvements in their everyday lives and influencing policies at all levels. We call on Governments to create an enabling environment for children to participate as equal actors in civil society based on the realization of their civil rights and freedoms.

Thank you.

² Save the Children (2013), Case study on Child Friendly Local Governance in Bangladesh leads to more investment in children, birth registration and social protection