

Declaration of adolescents from the First regional dialogue in Latin America and the Caribbean “On the road to equality”: 30 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

PREAMBLE

The youth representatives from North America, Central America, South America and the Caribbean (hereinafter the Americas) wrote this statement to make our feelings known about our current situation. We believe that the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been a great help to change the way children and adolescents are looked, since it serves as a basis and guide to grow and develop freely.

We believe that it is very important to protect our integrity to ensure the good development of a country, since we are the people who are changing the future. It is necessary that the laws protect our rights, allowing us to enjoy a dignified life, good health and full childhood, in addition to receiving a quality education without exclusion. At the same time, it must be the obligation of the governments to ensure that all state entities, as well as citizens, know our rights so we can act together to achieve compliance.

This statement contains what we feel and think, our proposals for change and the commitments we assume as young people for the full exercise of our rights.

VIOLENCE

- We consider that violence is any act of abuse of power that tramples over the dignity of someone and does not respect decisions, opinions and rights, harming that person.
- We observe that there are several types of violence such as: physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, corporal punishment, street harassment, gender, bullying (school bullying) and cyberbullying; and we are witnesses that violence is experienced in many places, such as educational and health centers, on the streets or inside the family, making us feel insecure in different contexts.
- Inequality, lack of opportunities, poor educational quality, unfavorable economic situations, gangs, patterns of violence within the family and the lack of effectiveness of governments when receiving complaints, follow up and making public policies to prevent these acts are factors that influence the increase in violence. Not accessing or restricting access to information is also considered as violence for us.
- We observe in our environment that violence is normalized. Many times, we live or witness it within the educational system or within families, and this affects our development in school and in life. Recurrently victims of violence do not report and have lost hope of receiving support. We believe that impunity cannot continue, and we must promote a strong Rule of Law. For this reason, we understand that it is urgent to take actions so that children and adolescents do not continue to be harmed.
- As youth we want to raise awareness among governments and all social actors to live in a world without violence. We maintain that it is the role of the State, civil society, private corporations and the media to inform and promote our rights from their roles.
- We state that it is not justifiable for children and adolescents to suffer violence and be invisible because our opinion must be heard and taken into due consideration in a subject that affects us as much as this one. We emphasize respect for socially vulnerable populations, such as indigenous peoples, LGTBIQ+ youth, migrants, among others.

We therefore propose:

- Improve public policies so that they are inclusive, efficient and all children are protected against all types of violence. We believe that there should be follow-up, continuity, recurrent spaces and an interactive and dynamic system that channels actions to overcome, address and/or prevent violence based on empathy, tolerance and solidarity.
- Carry out fair legal proceedings with young people who have committed acts of violence and who violate the rights of other people, studying the reasons for that violence to understand, address and eradicate it.
- That the authorities in charge ensure the safety and well-being of children and adolescents, in addition, create specialized institutions in charge of reinserting people who have committed violent acts and adequately assist the victims through new alliances to combat violence in all its forms. We perceive the lack of social workers and mental health specialists to treat the roots and not only the consequences of violence.
- We believe it is essential to adequately inform about acts of violence, disseminating data and real statistics in each country to raise awareness about this issue, where children and adolescents are taught about their rights and to live in harmony without discrimination or exclusion.
- Disseminate through different media, including social networks, videos, games, television and radio, campaigns aimed at society in general where what generates violence, its causes, consequences and how to prevent it is explained.
- Control and intervene the access of children and adolescents to weapons of any kind.
- Develop a more direct relationship between states and citizens, where youth have an important role to promote environments free of violence. We believe it is essential to avoid teaching through punishment.

We are committed to:

- Raise the voices of different realities before the competent authorities to make the requests of children and adolescents known and heard in our countries, so that first of all, we are protected and our security is guaranteed.
- Train ourselves constantly to disseminate the necessary information to children and adolescents who are in our community and, thus to help from our local spaces to empower others.
- Carry out activities with children and adolescents to learn that violence is not good or normal so that they know how to identify and appropriate their rights, helping each other in community.
- Support victims of violence so that they know there is hope and opportunity to continue developing their abilities.
- Talk to the family, authorities and teachers on how to prevent violence and what to do before it, generating innovative ideas that help us to think and act constantly.

EDUCATION

- We believe that the right to education is essential because it allows countries to reach high levels of development affecting positively childhood and adolescence.
- We are witnesses that the family is the foundation of formation on which the future of children and adolescents and of our nations is cultivated, and that schools are a fundamental pillar on which to construct and build this future.

- We believe that receiving a free and quality education that prepares us for the adversities and challenges of the future is something essential for a dignified life to which all people aspire, regardless of nationality, sex, sexual orientation, functional diversity, religion or belief, ethnicity, language, or other.
- We recognize the importance of eliminating the gaps that arise in rural and urban education, in other languages, and respectful of other cultures. That is why we need functional and quality educational models regardless of the social status, since we deserve the same treatment and we have the same rights.
- We believe that the current education model is not the most optimal for the time in which we live and we believe that we need new methods of teaching and evaluation, either for better student learning, as well as for a better management of work and work of the educators.
- We understand that the school or educational centers prepare students to practice or perform a profession, forgetting many important aspects such as multidisciplinary development, human rights, domestic work and the challenges of today's world. We believe it is necessary to evaluate the education that is currently being taught because it is not linked to the development of current skills, and to include the training of skills that will open new opportunities for learning and development.

We therefore propose:

- Apply new teaching methods so that students can develop all their skills, integrating new educational areas that promote the scientific, humanistic, artistic or technical development of each individual including education outside the classroom through experiences and strengthening environmental education.
- Accessing information is a basic human right, which is why we need schools to teach to access, search and use information in our favor, facilitating our development and learning.
- Ensure access to sustainable basic services in the public and private educational environment in terms of health, electricity, water, Internet access, technology, resources, transportation and ecology to ensure a true quality education.
- Promote education originally from the Americas, including the learning of indigenous languages, and strengthen the quality of education, mainly in rural and more vulnerable areas. The sign language of each country must be included in the educational curriculum as well as the teaching of languages.
- Provide comprehensive sexual education in all schools so that we are properly educated in matters of affectivity, sexuality and genders.
- Strengthen school motivation and promote participatory student culture and solid educational communities, creating entertaining educational spaces where students can productively invest their time and be more significantly supported in broader aspects than academics.
- Train teachers prior to the start of classes not only in education but also in the psychological, so they have better tools to support students. There should be a psychological examination prior to entering pedagogy studies to ensure psychological and emotional abilities of these future educators to ensure inclusive learning and the full development of the students. It is also important that they know how to work with people with disabilities, regardless the type, and include them in classrooms so that they can study together with the rest of the students. All of the above, assuming that the educator's role should be socially relieved and that dignified salaries be guaranteed without differences in public and private education. Unqualified teachers violate the right to quality education.
- Create public spaces where we can develop our artistic abilities and where to practice school subjects between peers. The education system must create a solid base to give us the

possibility to choose about our life projects. Students should not be discriminated against regarding what we really want to be and do.

We are committed to:

- Create various participation spaces using different strategies such as sports, leisure activities, workshops, and others, so that we can express our ideas about the state of their education.
- Promote education and its importance through places open to participation, the transmission of ideas and feelings.
- We are committed as teenagers to share information among peers on how to access a scholarship, to help them not to be careless with studies, and to discuss and include political issues, sexual and reproductive health, culture, art, gender, among others according to age and stage of development.
- Inform the authorities of the new educational methods that exist and which can be put into practice in educational classrooms.
- Promote new didactic teaching methodologies, create reinforcement groups for students who need it, and provide support to those who have difficulties in some activities and/or school work. Sharing knowledge and opinions regarding our education is a good way to improve it.
- As students, we are committed to dedicate our best efforts in our school activities and respect our educational environment, always helping and respecting everyone.

PARTICIPATION

- We believe that compliance with the right to participation in our empowerment, social development, education and timely solutions to the problems that plague us is essential.
- It is evident that our voices are not considered or heard when making decisions on various issues, mainly in politics. It is also evident that when we manifest and mobilize for a common cause, we contribute, solve and open relevant spaces for dialogue and action.
- We recognize different open spaces in our communities, in which our ideas can be expressed without being judged, having as principal axis the exchange of feelings, initiatives and opinions among young people.
- We live in realities where our families should listen to us, however, not always the voice of a teenager is taken into account in our immediate environment.
- We see participation as a flexible and broad aspect of our rights, including cultural, sports, social, environmental, political, among others.
- We believe that a prejudice persists in our region, when the feeling of a person is not taken into account due to the fact of being a minor.
- We consider relevant the respect for our freedom of expression and criteria, since many times we are forced to accept criteria that do not agree with our principles.
- We recognize respect, tolerance, understanding, good communication and positive leadership as values and principles that must be present in the spaces for participation.
- We believe that the right to participation must be respected as a mechanism to demand the improvement of those areas that impact our lives without being conditioned by the lack of these spaces.
- We observe that some vulnerable or minority groups see their right to participation blocked, as is the case of adolescents with disabilities, migrants, LGBTIQ+, or for ethnic or gender reasons.

We therefore propose:

- For children and adolescent from our region, to continue on the path of participation in its different areas and make use of its capacity to influence the world around us, promoting initiatives that make our role in society visible. That is why we urge the international community to create public policies that guarantee this.
- Incorporating young people into spaces of dialogue with political authorities and that we join together to dialogue for decision making, is the only way in which we are really taken into account and truly heard. We do not want to be invited and approached to events just to take pictures.
- Many times, the State is in charge of silencing or repressing us violently. It is the duty of the State to stop using force and put into practice active listening and dialogue to respond to what social manifestations demand.
- Create spaces for intergenerational and intersectoral dialogue to break taboos regarding sexual education issues, the quality education we want, inclusion and non-discrimination, taking into account the different thoughts and approaches to achieve understanding and cooperation.
- At school level, we must participate in the preparation of manuals or regulations of coexistence since its application affects us directly and we have the capacity to favor the fulfillment of these.
- Promote diverse and adapted spaces to the different interests, capacities and realities, where we feel welcome, heard and helped.
- Facilitate access to information from organizations, associations and institutions of different nature so that we can understand and express our concerns without fear of punishment.
- Encourage more participation spaces at the community level, where besides taking into account our opinions and ideas, we will be helped to exploit our talents and abilities from diverse and empathic perspectives.
- Carry out initiatives that inform the population about the spaces they have to participate and be heard, as well as the different ways of exercising their presence in society that are within their reach.
- Promote and support laws that ensure that part of the profits of the private sector are allocated to funds related to youth projects.

We are committed to:

- Work together with the State, civil society and the private sector, generating adequate conditions to have an effective representation of the youth in the decision-making spaces, guaranteeing the fulfillment of our rights.
- Form groups of adolescents who, through permanent dialogue, can empower themselves, seek solutions, design strategies and develop integrally with autonomy and decision power.
- Constantly communicate to the authorities that surround us about the different concerns and problems that arise, serving as a connecting bridge for other young people.
- Incorporate vulnerable children and adolescents (in conditions of poverty, with some disability, belonging to ethnic or cultural minorities, among others) into spaces of expression and search for solutions in order to have broad and inclusive approaches.
- Promote participation spaces whose structures do not present any hierarchical order and thus facilitate the participation of all.
- Share our stories with young people who seek empowerment to defend their rights, with the aim of generating an environment of security as a whole and defense of the causes that move us.

GENDER

- We are all actors of objective 5 "Gender Equality", joining our voices, we will make it a possible dream.
- We know that this issue is marked by a sociocultural factor that extends through generations.
- We observe that girls and women are the most affected, since they are subject to discrimination and physical, psychological and sexual violence, in intrafamilial, social, work, school and public spaces.
- We highlight that machismo is one of the causes of the inequality gap that exists in today's society, which is afraid of breaking paradigms. We must strengthen education from home in terms of equity.
- We are saddened by the unconsciousness of women's rights and the fact that they are not given priority, violating their right to decide and participate.
- We consider that the female society represents more than half of the world's population and segregating them causes the stagnation of social progress.

We therefore propose:

- Create more policies that allow the empowerment of girls and women for their full development.
- Promote gender equality at home and at school, especially in early childhood to eliminate stereotypes, promoting a non-sexist education where values are taught, and equal opportunities are transmitted, respecting the rights of the child.
- Develop public policies that prevent and treat sexual abuse and intrafamily violence so that all girls and adolescents feel safe.
- End the harassment, invisibility and prejudice towards those who report, and femicides. Stop killing us.
- Expand the use of inclusive language when we refer to specific gender to be able to express ourselves freely and without prejudice.
- Include all the actors related to the cause and work together to achieve an impact on the issue of gender equity.
- Encourage early childhood development free of gender roles as well as the creation of games, toys and books that do not categorize us.
- Do not encourage the consumption of audiovisual content that reinforces gender roles.
- Promote a change in the old social mandates that continue to promote gender inequality and do not understand the value of equality.
- We propose that the State, civil society and the private sector secure resources to promote practices for educational purposes that reinforce equality between both genders.
- We urge States to open a debate on abortion with the main participation of women.

We are committed to:

- Lead any movement with the purpose of reducing inequality.
- Disseminate information to be able to help those people who suffer from gender violence, especially women and girls.
- Promote an equitable society: women showing their capabilities beyond gender stereotypes, and men developing new masculinities.
- Oppose any sexist mockery, act or pejorative comment and similar situations that we perceive in the development of our community.

- Recognize that no gender represents weakness, allowing their feelings to be accepted and validated by both sides.
- Modify the laws of each nation that prevent gender equality and favor one more than others. Equal wages for women and men.
- Respect concretely the term equity where masculinity or femininity is not considered as inferior or superior. We believe in the role of feminism in today's society to break the barriers of machismo and patriarchal systems. America will be feminist.

IDENTITY

- Young people usually feel that we must repress what we are to avoid being judged by society.
- We live under the pressure of the stereotypes imposed by our environment from an early age.
- We recognize that the educational system does not grant space, and therefore, does not respect the right to identity, which we consider fundamental for our development.
- We also believe that our identity is affected when our participation is not taken into account when elaborating norms that involve us.
- We look with concern at the intolerance present in society towards different cultural, sexual, gender, artistic and religious identities, among others.
- We feel that disrespect for the identity of ethnic, sexual, gender, cultural and social diversity generates discrimination and obstructs the development of our personality. We believe that clothing or culture should not incite discrimination.

We therefore propose:

- Birth certificates must be free of charge and accessible throughout the Americas. The most vulnerable communities do not have access to this procedure, which prevents access to basic services and directly violates the right to identity.
- Adopt new educational systems, where each student is allowed to develop our skills and our personality, in order to promote personal security and social inclusion.
- That both in the family and in society, inclusion, acceptance, respect, tolerance, empathy and understanding are promoted in all environments.
- To the governments, to commit themselves with inclusive public policies that allow to ensure our right to the identity and make visible the vulnerable groups of the society so that they also have their space.
- To all people, reflect on how they act with other people, and how this can affect those around them.
- Create spaces that promote equity through programs of self-esteem and acceptance so that youth can develop in an authentic manner.
- Generate alliances between different actors in society to promote progress towards zero discrimination and the inclusion of everyone.

We are committed to:

- Work on the acceptance of ourselves.
- Acquire knowledge and responsibility about our rights and fight to be enforced.
- Spread messages of acceptance through social networks and other media and make them part of our lives.

ANTONIA CAMIZO / CHILE
El Salvador Bryan Valladares

SOFIA FERNANDEZ / URUGUAY

Panamá Jordenis Li Jordenis de Argentina Belén Pérez

- Engage in groups and organizations that promote respect for identity and help youth in their integration into society with an emphasis on ethnic minorities, migrant populations, sexually diverse population and people with disabilities.
- Raise the voice against everything that represses us, always in a framework of respect for the rights of others.
- Generate circles of trust, where people feel free to be who they are and to express themselves.
- The youth leaders, we commit to urge the states and civil society to promote educational practices that respect the identity of each person and eliminate standards of normality that prevent their expression.

Guatemala Eyleen Teresa Menchú Fay Eyleen A
Costa Rica Julissa Porras Guevara

Colombia Wendy Vanessa Romero Beltrán. Flopé
Guyana Rhoi Narcena Khem Francisco López
Paraguay

Haiti Pierre faanty faanty Pierre.
Honduras Keren Yoanny Castellanos Flores

Mexico Ana Paula Unas molina
Venezuela Camila Sabal Vargas López
Nicaragua Karen del Socorro Fajardo

Ecuador Jhonny David Ramirez Yagual
Perú José Luis Bernilla Chaname

República Dominicana Elssy Beatriz Fossó Ramirez Embunh R.
Estados Unidos Ashley Moreno-Candales

Brazil Patrick Figueiredo Antunes Pereira
Bolivia Korte Lorana Justiniano Bajarano

Trinidad and Tobago Asia Dial
Belize Sole' Meighan

Cuba Alexandra Esthefany Diaz, Portuondo Chap
Jamaica Cameron Alkern Campbell E. Campbell