



GENEVA / NEW YORK (20 November 2012) – Five top United Nations child rights experts* today urged world Governments to adopt more active measures to protect children from all forms of violence, prevent the perpetration of crimes against children and to bring to justice those responsible for child sexual exploitation and for the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

On [Universal Children's Day](#), the UN experts highlighted the urgency of achieving universal ratification and effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its three optional protocols. "These treaties are key to the safeguard of children's rights and their effective protection from violence, abuse and exploitation in peace and conflict," the experts stressed.

In May 2010 the UN Secretary-General launched a two-year global campaign for the universal ratification of the first two Optional Protocols by 2012 with the joint support of his Special Representatives on Violence against Children, and for Children and Armed Conflict; the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, in cooperation with UNICEF and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Since the launch of the campaign, 24 Member States have ratified the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography which is now in force in 161 countries; and 18 States have become party to the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict amounting to a total of 150 ratifications.

In December 2011, the General Assembly adopted the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, introducing a communications procedure to enable children to obtain redress for the violations of their rights.

"The multiple ongoing conflicts with the involvement of children and the heightened vulnerabilities brought about by the ongoing financial and economic crisis underscore the importance of the ratification of the Convention and its three Optional Protocols as integral safeguards for children," said Jean Zermatten, who currently heads the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. "Accessing to the third protocol to the Convention on a complaint procedure is essential to strengthen child rights protection and to combat impunity for child rights violations."

"There can be no room for complacency in our struggle to eliminate violence against children," stressed Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children. "We are nearing the goal of universal ratification, strengthening children's protection from violence and bringing to an end impunity for incidents of sexual abuse and exploitation. Ratification is a crucial step but only the start of a demanding process of implementation."

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, highlighted that there are still 44 States that have not ratified the protocol on child soldiers. "I urge conflict-affected countries to ratify this treaty as a matter of urgency, and those at peace and with no standing armies to follow suit, in a global effort to end the inhuman practice of child recruitment and use," she said.

"It is extremely encouraging to note the pace of progress achieved since the beginning of the ratification campaign ", said Ms. Najat Maalla M'jid, UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. "However, in spite of the numerous initiatives undertaken to combat these phenomena, the sale and sexual exploitation of children in countries of all regions persist and reach sometimes alarming levels. States and the whole international community should spare no efforts to prevent children from being treated as commodities", she pointed out.

For Susan Bissell, UNICEF's Chief of Child Protection, "these legal instruments are critical to our efforts to protect all children, everywhere. Incorporating these standards into national legal frameworks, and raising awareness about them are all part of a process of social change that is so critically important," she added. "UNICEF supports states in their translation of laws into actions that protect children in order that they may live and grow safely, and with dignity."

On 20 November, Universal Children's Day, the five child rights experts insisted on the crucial need to place child rights as a priority in the policy agenda and to implement all necessary measures to ensure the effective promotion and protection of the rights of all children, without discrimination.

(*) Jean Zermatten, Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children; Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Najat Maalla M'jid, UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and Susan Bissell, UNICEF's Chief of Child Protection.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

The three Optional Protocols:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc-sale.htm>

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc-conflict.htm>

http://treaties.un.org/doc/source/signature/2012/CTC_4-11d.pdf

Additional links:

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- [United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](http://www.ohchr.org/) (OHCHR) 

