

# Children's Rights and the Environment

Guidance On Reporting To The Committee On The Rights Of The Child



 terre des hommes  
Help for Children in Need



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The environment matters to children.

That clear and vocal message is being sent to decision-makers and the global public by the thousands of children and young people that have marched on the streets and continue to demand more action to protect the climate. As citizens of their countries and the world they claim their right to freedom of expression and to be heard.

In too many instances, the views, rights and interests of children go completely unheard in decisions on the environment, leading to adverse outcomes in terms of children's well-being and development. For this reason, the authors of this guidance believe that it is critical to shed more light on the various links between children's rights and the environment, and to ensure that these connections are reflected in the work of relevant decision-making bodies.

## WHAT AND WHO IS THIS GUIDANCE FOR?

This guidance seeks to provide a concise guide to reporting on children's rights as they relate to environmental issues. It is primarily intended to assist civil society organizations from both the human rights and environmental fields with shadow reporting for States' periodic reviews under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). However, the guidance also provides a basis for wider uptake among other actors as well, for example for national reporting by States themselves, for

international organizations such as UNICEF, and for research and academic institutions. The guidance can also be used as a resource to support reporting on children's environmental rights within the context of other sustainable development and environmental agreements, such as the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to national accountability mechanisms such as National Human Rights Institutions.



## WHY REPORT ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT?

### Environmental risks pose a major threat to children

Significant evidence now attests to the fact that no group is more vulnerable to environmental harm than children. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately **1.7 of the 5.9 million deaths among children under the age of five each year – more than a quarter – are attributable to largely-preventable environmental causes.**<sup>1</sup> For children that survive, environmental harm can lead to irreversible, lifelong and even transgenerational consequences, many of which may not manifest themselves for years or decades. The UN Special Rapporteur<sup>2</sup> on Toxics has described the effects of pollution as a “silent pandemic” of disease and disability affecting millions of children in every part of the world.<sup>3</sup> Air pollution alone kills 570,000 children under the age of five each year as a result of respiratory infections such as pneumonia.<sup>4</sup> Other leading causes of child deaths, including malaria, diarrheal disease, and injuries such as poisoning, falls and drowning, also have strong links to environmental risks, such as exposure to hazardous chemicals, toxic substances and waste, contaminated water, and the impacts of climate change.

Beyond children's health, climate change and interrelated challenges such as loss of biodiversity and the collapse of ecosystems pose severe and far-reaching threats to a broad range of children's rights. For example, extreme weather events destroy schools and homes, undermining children's rights to education and an adequate standard of living. Children that are displaced in these contexts may become separated from their families, and face heightened risks of exploitation, violence and abuse. Loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems can have devastating effects on livelihoods and subsistence farming, increasing deprivation and inequities among children, and potentially leading to forced migration when traditional ways of life that are closely linked to land or water become untenable. This has implications for children's cultural rights and poses unique challenges for indigenous children in particular. In cities, children's inability to access green and safe spaces, and to interact with the natural world, undermines their right to play and their social, psychological, emotional and physical health and development more broadly.

### Children are disproportionately vulnerable

Children are disproportionately affected by environmental harm due to the unique and rapid period of physical and mental development that occurs during childhood, particularly between birth and the age of five. For example, children's developing organs, immune systems and smaller airways are less able to deal with toxic air, contaminated water, vector-borne diseases or heatwaves. Typical behaviors, such as hand-to-mouth activity in young children, and spending longer periods of time playing outdoors, further increase their exposure. Children are also less equipped to recover from psychological trauma they may experience, for example during and after extreme weather events, which may cause injury or the death of loved ones, or separate them from their families. Certain groups of children, such as girls, indigenous children, children with disabilities, and children living in poverty, face the greatest risks of all. For example, poor children often live in degraded environments and close to sources of pollution. Their families rarely have the material resources to cope with such challenges and no access to adequate health care or other remedy.

## Children's rights are consistently overlooked in relation to the environment

Despite the scale and gravity of environmental harm on children's rights, a lack of awareness and understanding among both child rights and environmental advocates and decision-makers persists. Human rights obligations, including the CRC, tend to be overlooked in setting and implementing environment-related policies and standards at the national and international levels, despite their relevance. Similarly, laws, policies and actions relevant to children's rights frequently fail to consider environmental factors. The result is a major gap in terms of monitoring, acting and reporting on the impacts and measures required to fulfil child rights in the context of environmental protection, and on progress made. This situation is further compounded by short-term political cycles, which do not tend to prioritize long-term approaches capable of meeting current and future generations' needs.

Children are also among the least empowered groups on environmental issues. They often lack access to basic information and transformative, quality education in this area, and are seldom provided with mechanisms to participate in decision-making, for example in consultations relating to the construction of hydro dams, road construction or new mining projects that will fundamentally affect their lives and communities. When acting and speaking out on environmental issues, children may face severe criticism, patronisation, intimidation, harassment, reprisals and even violence from authorities or corporations<sup>5</sup>. Children also face major barriers in seeking redress, including compensation, for infringements of their rights due to environmental harm. For example, the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics has noted that the burden is placed on children to prove that a toxic chemical caused their injuries.<sup>6</sup> In many cases, this burden of proof is virtually insurmountable, implicating States' obligation to prevent exposure in the first place.

## Reporting on children's environmental rights will enhance standards & accountability

The CRC is one of the few international human rights treaties to explicitly address environmental issues. Despite this, reporting on environmental harm to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (Committee) remains patchy, and the treaty body has urged States, UNICEF and civil society organizations to gather and submit more evidence and information on this subject.<sup>7</sup> Increased reporting will improve the understanding of the Committee, States and other actors regarding the connections between child rights and the environment, helping to strengthen coherence between national and global child rights, environmental and development commitments (see section V), and contributing to enhanced standards and accountability. Ultimately, increasing awareness and visibility of the relationship between children's rights and the environment represents a necessary (although not sufficient) step for obtaining action by governments and other relevant actors that guarantees children's right to grow up in a healthy and sustainable environment.



## WHAT TO REPORT ON?

### The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the environment

There is no independent right to a healthy environment in the CRC but the treaty does explicitly recognize environmental issues in two places:

#### ARTICLE 24(2)

##### on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health

provides that:

*“States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures: [...] to combat disease and malnutrition [...] taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution.”*

#### ARTICLE 29(1)

##### on the aims of education

which stresses that the right to education must include:

*“... the development of respect for the natural environment.”*

In addition to reporting on environmental issues in relation to these two articles, organizations can also consider a broader approach. A growing body of guidance from the Committee<sup>8</sup> and other human rights mechanisms identifies a wide range of provisions that closely relate to environmental protection, including the rights to:

**ART. 2** Non-discrimination

**ART. 3** Best interests of the child

**ART. 6** Life, survival and development

**ART. 8** An identity

**ART. 12** Right to be heard

**ARTS. 13|17** Freedom of expression and information

**ART. 15** Freedom of Assembly and Association

**ART. 19** Protection from all forms of violence and physical and mental integrity

**ARTS. 23|30** Rights of specific groups of children, including children with disabilities and indigenous children

**ART. 27** Adequate standard of living, including food, water and adequate housing

**ART. 28** Education

**ART. 32** Freedom from exploitation

**ART. 31** Rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts

Linking the effects of environmental harm to a vast range of children's rights, including the rights to life, development, health, play, water, food, cultural life, and an adequate standard of living, will enable decision-makers to adopt more holistic environmental policies and standards taking into account the real-life conditions of children.

## What are the duties of States in relation to child rights and the environment?

The former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment has noted that **“the human rights obligations of States in relation to the environment apply with particular force to the rights of children, who are especially at risk from environmental harm and often unable to protect their own rights.”**<sup>9</sup> According to his authoritative report on child rights and the environment, States’ heightened obligations can be categorized as follows:

### 1. Obligations to protect children from environmental harm

States must take effective measures to protect children from actual and foreseeable environmental harm, including by ensuring that their best interests are a primary consideration with respect to all relevant decision-making. For example, States should:



Collect disaggregated data on the specific effects of environmental harm on children to raise public awareness and inform laws and policies which adequately protect against such harm



Conduct environmental impact assessments of projects or policies that include a careful examination of impacts on children



Adopt and implement environmental laws, standards, policies and action plans that take full account of the ways in which children are more susceptible to environmental harm and/or face barriers to exercising their rights



Include child-specific strategies and programmes when developing and implementing international environmental agreements that address threats to which children are particularly vulnerable.

### Obligations in relation to the business sector

States must adequately regulate private actors, including business enterprises, to ensure that they comply with all applicable environmental laws, and do not contribute to abuses of children’s rights.



The Committee on the Rights of the Child has made clear that States should require businesses to carry out ‘child-rights due diligence’ to ensure that they ‘identify, prevent and mitigate their impact on child rights including across their business relationships and within global operations.’<sup>10</sup> States must also ensure that information held by businesses relevant to the health and well-being of children is made publicly available, and that victims of environmental harm caused by businesses have access to effective remedies and timely reparation.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Obligations in relation to education, public awareness, access to information, participation in environmental decision-making and to remedies for harm

Fulfilling these rights helps to ensure that children are empowered to make themselves heard, to be taken seriously in relation to decisions on the environment, and to protect themselves from environmental harm. States should:<sup>12</sup>



**Make information about specific environmental risks for children and how they may protect themselves from those risks publicly available and accessible, including for children;**



**Provide a safe and empowering environment for child rights defenders acting on the environment, including by promoting a positive narrative around their activities;<sup>13</sup>**



**Ensure that educational programmes increase children's understanding of environmental issues and strengthen their capacity to respond to environmental challenges, taking into account the culture, language and environmental situation of particular groups of children;**



**Facilitate the meaningful and equitable participation of children in environmental decision-making processes; and**



**Protect children's rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly in relation to environmental matters;**



**Remove barriers that children face to defend their rights in relation to the environment in court.**

### Applying the best interests of the child principle in the environmental context

The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Toxics states that "(t)he best interests of the child are best served by preventing exposure to toxic chemicals and pollution, and taking precautionary measures with respect to those substances whose risks are not well understood. Unfortunately, industrial competitiveness, risk management options and cost-benefit considerations are prioritized over the best interests of the child".<sup>14</sup>

For example, the complete absence or weakness of national air quality standards and their enforcement in many States indicates a widespread failure to act in accordance with the best interests of the child, with devastating impacts upon the health of children around the world. A different approach is possible, as good practices from certain countries show. The State of California, for example, has established rules to prohibit siting new schools within a certain distance of busy roads, in response to scientific evidence about the adverse health effects of traffic-related air pollution on developing lungs, brains and other organs.<sup>15</sup>

In the context of climate change, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights notes that "States must take ambitious measures to minimize the future negative impacts of climate change on children by: limiting global warming to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels; focusing adaptation measures on protecting the most vulnerable children; and by ensuring that climate action measures are the product of participatory, evidence-based decision-making processes that take into account the ideas and best interests of children, as expressed by children themselves."<sup>16</sup> The Philippines' Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act of 2016 provides a best practice model for legislation that addresses children's heightened vulnerabilities during emergencies and disaster situations, such as extreme weather events linked to climate change. The Government's Act provides for specific measures to protect and educate children in disaster settings, to ensure their participation in relevant decision-making processes, and to improve the collection of disaggregated data in the context of disasters.<sup>17</sup>



# IV HOW TO REPORT?

Reporting can cover the full range of children's rights and States' obligations outlined above, as well as a wide range of implementation measures, including budgetary measures, international cooperation, regulation in relevant policy areas, national action plans, consultation, remedial measures, national curricula and environmental impacts assessments. In practice, the information provided to accountability mechanisms such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child is often concerned

with concrete environmental situations on the ground. This section highlights examples of the ways in which the Committee has referred to environmental issues in its Concluding Observations to States, and serves to demonstrate the breadth of topics that can be addressed in submissions. The degree of specificity of recommendations varies significantly. To date, the Committee has addressed the topic both under affected rights and as a stand-alone section (for example on climate change).

## Concluding Observations from the Committee on environmental issues



### Environmental degradation and pollution

“While noting the information provided by the State party that tested groundwater was not contaminated by uranium in 2013, the Committee remains concerned at the negative effects of such contamination, as well as that of air pollution on children's health. Taking note of target 3.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party: Develop comprehensive plans to monitor children's environmental health at all levels of government, Continue conducting an assessment of the effect of air pollution and uranium contamination on children, Regulate the maximum concentration of air pollution and clean up all sites contaminated by uranium in the State party.”

– *Concluding Observation for Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019)*

“The Committee is concerned at reports on the environmental degradation and widespread pollution in the Niger Delta as a result of the oil industry operating in the area, and its impact on the health and standard of living of children; population in the Niger Delta suffers from respiratory problems, such as asthma and bronchitis, as a result of toxins released from gas flaring; negative effects on children of global climate change, including in the context of the desertification in the northern states. (...) The Committee recommends that the State party takes immediate measures [including] establishing independent oversight bodies to assess the safety operations of the petroleum industry, and developing appropriate standards on environmental and social responsibility of the business sector, in consultation with the public. The Committee furthermore recommends that the State party work

alongside the business sector to increase, through the school curriculum and communication programmes, the knowledge of children, parents, teachers and the public at large on environmental issues, including on the effect of oil extraction on health and livelihoods as well as of growing desertification in the North and its related effects on the health of children, such as malnutrition.

– *Concluding Observation for Nigeria (2010)*

“The Committee is concerned about the negative impact of the mining sector, in particular the activities of lead mining in Kabwe, on the rights of children, such as the right to health, development and play and their standard of living.”

– *Concluding Observation for Zambia (2016)*



### Toxic chemicals

“The Committee is concerned that DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) pesticides, which have been linked to cancer, nerve damage and reproductive defects, may still occasionally be used in the State party...”

The Committee recommends that the State party: [...] Ban the use of harmful pesticides and take the necessary measures to ensure access to health care and services for children affected by pesticides.”

– *Concluding Observation for Haiti (2016)*



### Air pollution and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

“The Committee is concerned at the high level of air pollution, which directly affects child health in the State party and contributes to the negative impact of climate change affecting various rights of the child, both in the State party and in other countries...The Committee recommends that the State Party: Set out a clear legal commitment, with appropriate technical, human and financial resources, to scale up and expedite the implementation of plans to reduce air pollution levels, especially in areas near schools and residential areas”  
– *Concluding Observation for the United Kingdom (2016)*

“The Committee recommends that the State Party [...] conduct an assessment of the impact of air pollution on children's health and a study on the prevalence of asthma and respiratory diseases in children as a basis for designing a well-resourced strategy to remedy the situation, and regulate the maximum concentrations of air-pollutant emissions, including from road transport.”  
– *Concluding Observation for Belgium (2019)*



### Climate change<sup>18</sup>

“While noting as positive that the State party has introduced a National Climate Change Policy and Adaptation Plan, the Committee is concerned at the adverse impact of climate change and natural disasters on the rights of the child, including the rights to education, health, adequate housing, safe and drinkable water and sanitation, inter alia.”  
– *Concluding Observation for Saint Lucia (2014)*



### Mainstreaming child rights in climate and environmental action

“Noting that the State party is prone to natural disasters, and drawing attention to target 1.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals on building the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations by 2030 so as to reduce their vulnerability to extreme climate-related events, economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters, the Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Identify, including through the collection of disaggregated data, the types of risks children would face in the event of natural disasters; (b) Ensure that the special vulnerabilities and needs of children, as well as their views, are taken into account in developing policies and programmes addressing climate, environmental change and disaster risk management; (c) Seek bilateral, multilateral, regional and international cooperation in the areas of disaster risk reduction and of mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate and environmental change.”  
– *Concluding Observation for Antigua and Barbuda (2017)*

“The Committee recommends that the State party...place children's rights at the centre of national and international climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, including through its new domestic climate strategy, and in the framework of its international climate change programmes and financial support.”  
– *Concluding Observation for the United Kingdom (2016)*

“The Committee urges the State Party to ensure that children's views are taken into account in developing policies and programmes addressing climate change, the environment and disaster risk management and to increase children's awareness and preparedness for climate change and natural disasters, take measures to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases by establishing targets and deadlines to phase out the domestic use and export of coal and to accelerate the transition to renewable energy, including by committing to meeting 100 per cent of its electricity needs with renewable energy.”  
– *Concluding Observation for Australia (2019)*



## Environmental education

The Committee recommends that “the State party work alongside the business sector to increase, through the school curriculum and communication programmes, the knowledge of children, parents, teachers and the public at large on environmental issues”.

– *Concluding Observation for Nigeria (2010)*

“Increase children’s knowledge of environmental health issues by introducing environmental health education programmes in schools.” - *Concluding Observation for the Philippines (2009)*



## Access to information

“Establish monitoring requirements for all industries to undertake assessments, consultations and full public disclosure of the environmental, health-related and human rights impacts of their business activities and their plans to address such impacts”

– *Concluding Observation for China (2013)*

“Provide, in schoolbooks and materials, accurate information about the risk of radiation exposure and the increased vulnerability of children to radiation exposure.”

– *Concluding Observation for Japan (2019)*



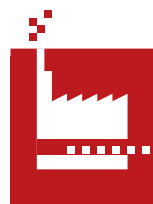
## Participation of children in environment-related decision making

“The Committee welcomes the positive steps taken to address deforestation but remains concerned about the State party’s policy to increase mono-cropping and that the land laws do not reflect the nomadic lifestyle of pygmy communities, including children, who rely on the forests for their livelihood. The Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Review its existing policies regarding mono-cropping, with the full and effective participation of pygmy communities, including children; (b) Ensure a transparent and human rights due diligence process, with the full participation of pygmy communities, including children, before demarcating lands for commercial purposes or turning them into national parks (...).

– *Concluding Observation for Gabon (2016)*

“In developing policies or programmes to address the issues of climate change and disaster risk management, ensure that the special vulnerabilities and needs of children, as well as their views, are taken into account”

– *Concluding Observation for Samoa (2016)*



## Environmental impact of the business sector

“The Committee recommends that the State party: (a) Establish a clear regulatory framework for the business enterprises operating in the State party to ensure that their activities do not negatively affect human rights or endanger environmental and other standards, especially those relating to children’s rights; (b) Conduct an independent study on the impacts on children’s health from environmental pollution caused by the activities of extractive industries, including the impacts from water pollution and from dust from mining (...)

– *Concluding Observation for South Africa (2016)*

## REPORTING ON CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO A SAFE AND



## HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT UNDER OTHER FRAMEWORKS

Shadow or 'parallel' reporting under the CRC is not the only option available to non-state actors seeking to hold States to account for children's environmental rights. States also have periodic reporting duties under various national, regional and international agreements and frameworks that address issues related to the environment, and should incorporate an explicit and comprehensive focus on children and actions taken to address their rights in this context. These processes frequently call for, or encourage monitoring by – and consultation with – civil society and key stakeholders, offering opportunities to introduce or heighten focus on child rights obligations under the CRC, linking these to relevant provisions where possible. Indeed, the Committee has already taken steps in this direction, by beginning to consistently link its Concluding Observations on environmental issues to particular Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

Some examples of possible entry points for enhancing accountability through monitoring and reporting (both by States and CSOs) in key international frameworks are highlighted below:

- **The Sustainable Development Goals** contain multiple child-specific targets and indicators, and virtually all of the SDGs are child-relevant and include a strong environmental dimension (see table 1). The SDGs foresee a central role for 'country-led' national and subnational SDG reporting, as well as reviews at regional and global levels. Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights notes that in global reporting ('voluntary national reviews'), many States are highlighting the efforts and measures that they have taken to improve children's environmental education.<sup>19</sup> While all review processes are voluntary, they include an emphasis on inclusiveness and broad participation, providing opportunities for CSOs and children to engage.<sup>20</sup>

TABLE 1

## Examples of child-relevant targets under the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda<sup>21</sup>

TARGET	LINK TO CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS
<b>SDG 1, TARGET 5 ON POVERTY:</b> By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters	Children are among the most vulnerable groups during and in the wake of climate-related disasters
<b>SDG 3, TARGET 9 ON HEALTH:</b> By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination	The impact of pollution on children's right to health is a significant problem in most countries
<b>SDG 11, TARGET 7 ON CITIES:</b> By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities	The environmental dimension of the right to play is poorly understood and underrepresented in Concluding Observations.
<b>SDG 4, TARGET 7 ON EDUCATION:</b> By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development;	A number of SDGs refers to access to environmental information and education. States should focus on these SDGS to promote a rights-based approach and enhance coverage of measures undertaken to implement Art. 29 (1)e of the CRC.
<b>SDG 13, TARGET 3 ON CLIMATE CHANGE:</b> Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning	

- **The Paris Agreement** preamble calls for children's rights to be considered in the context of climate action. States have obligations to report on progress made in implementing and achieving their national climate plans ('Nationally Determined Contributions') and are also encouraged (although not obliged) to report on climate change impacts and adaptation. In addition, States must convey national reports with respect to their obligations under the UNFCCC on a cyclical basis.<sup>22</sup> While preparatory processes for these reports are State-led, they offer opportunities for consultation and participation, in line with the UNFCCC commitment to encourage the widest participation of NGOs in the climate process (art. 4). At the international level, there are also numerous opportunities to directly provide submissions with respect to child-relevant workstreams, such as those dealing with Action for Climate Empowerment, adaptation, gender etc. The official Children and Youth constituency to the UNFCCC (YOUNGO), for example, regularly provides submissions, highlighting research, gaps, progress and recommendations.
- **The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030)** recognizes the role of children and youth as agents of change, as well as education, access to information and participation. As of 2018, countries must report on their progress towards achievement of consolidated global targets and indicators.<sup>23</sup> Countries also use nationally-defined targets and indicators to measure their progress on national and local disaster risk reduction plans, and are expected to promote 'public scrutiny' in these efforts.
- **The Convention on Biological Diversity** contains no specific reference to children, although it links the definition of sustainability to the needs of future generations (art. 2) and obliges Parties to include biodiversity in public education (art. 13). States are required to produce National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and national implementation reports under the CBD, adopting a participatory approach. A 2012 decision encouraged States to include youth fully in these processes.<sup>24</sup>
- **The Minamata Convention on Mercury** requires Parties to develop national action plans (NAPs) to prevent children's exposure to mercury in the context of artisanal gold mining, and to provide access to information (Annex C, art. 1). It also calls on governments to monitor children's exposure, and to provide testing and treatment. The official NAP guidance adopted by States recommends that human rights groups be included as advisory group stakeholders, to monitor and provide inputs on healthy, children's and women's rights.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to international frameworks, **legal frameworks concluded at the regional and national levels** offer further entry points for reporting and these are often easier to access for civil society organisations than the international level. Under the UNECE Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters, for example, States have to report regularly about national implementation measures and consult the public for this purpose. The Conference of the Parties has established a Committee that reviews compliance with the Convention and can receive communications from the public. At the national level, opportunities may include submitting reports, research and recommendations to accountability mechanisms involved in relevant national, sub-national and sectoral monitoring and review processes, such as Parliamentary inquiries or Committees that oversee implementation of national frameworks on the environment. These same bodies may oversee regional and international obligations and commitments for sustainable development and environmental plans/action, such as those outlined above).

## VI

USEFUL  
RESOURCES/LINKS**Children's environmental rights**

OHCHR (2020) Realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment

Committee on the Rights of the Child's report (2017) on the 2016 Day of General Discussion on Child Rights and the Environment

UN Special Rapporteur on the Environment's report (2018) on children's rights and the environment and child-friendly version

Children's Environmental Rights Initiative:  
[www.childrenvironment.org](http://www.childrenvironment.org)

UNICEF climate and environment reports, resources and tools

**Climate change**

UN Special Rapporteur on the Environment's report (2019) on the right to a safe climate

OHCHR's report (2017) on climate change and children's rights

UNICEF Climate Change and Environmental Education:  
A companion to the Child Friendly Schools Manual

**Toxics/pollution**

UN Special Rapporteur on the Environment's report (2019) on air pollution

UN Special Rapporteur on Toxic Waste's report (2016) on toxics and pollution and children's rights

**Examples of alternative reports addressing environmental issues**

Australian School Strike for Climate Action alternative report – the first submission from children to the Committee on climate change (Australia, 2019)

Swiss Youth for Climate and CIEL (Switzerland, 2019)

Centre for International Environmental Law alternative report addressing climate change and child rights in Norway, 2018

Terre des Hommes alternative report addressing the impacts of lead mining on child rights in Zambia, 2016

International Indian Treaty Council alternative report addressing the impacts of toxics on indigenous children in Mexico, 2015

**General guidance and tips for reporting to the CRC Committee**

Child Rights Connect CRC reporting publications and minisite

CIEL and GI-ESCR (2020) Toolkit on reporting to Human Rights Treaty Bodies on Climate Change

## Endnotes

- 1 WHO, 2017, “Don’t pollute my future! The impact of the environment on children’s health”
- 2 UN Special Rapporteur is a title given to independent experts that have been appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to study, advise and publicly report on a specific country or thematic mandate.
- 3 UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics, 2016 report to the UN Human Rights Council on the Rights of Child and Toxics (A/HRC/33/41), <http://www.srtoxics.org/2016/09/duty-prevent-childhood-exposure/>
- 4 WHO, 2017, “Don’t pollute my future! The impact of the environment on children’s health”
- 5 The UN Human Rights Council has called on States to “provide a safe and enabling environment for initiatives by young people and children to defend human rights relating to the environment” (Resolution 40/11).
- 6 UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics, op. cit.
- 7 See ‘Recommendations’ of the Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Day of General Discussion (DGD) on Child Rights and the Environment Outcome Report, 2017, available here
- 8 The Committee has addressed environmental issues through a number of General Comments, Concluding Observations (COs) to States, and notably following its 2016 DGD on Child Rights and the Environment. Concluding Observations have increased significantly: prior to 2014, <40% of COs referred to the environment. Since 2015, this figure has risen to 80%. Section IV provides examples.
- 9 UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, 2018 report to the UN Human Rights Council on Child Rights and the Environment (A/HRC/37/58)
- 10 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013), General Comment 16: State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children’s rights
- 11 UNSR Human Rights and the Environment, 2018, op. cit.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 In this regard, States should implement the outcome recommendations from the 2018 Day of General Discussion of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Protecting and Empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders.
- 14 UNSR 2016, child rights and toxics
- 15 California Education Code: ([http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=200320040SB352](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=200320040SB352).)
- 16 <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/RightsChild/ChildrenOnePager.pdf>
- 17 Submission from the Philippines to OHCHR for the Analytical Study on the Relationship between Climate Change and the full and effective enjoyment of the Rights of the Child
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