

Sixth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children

ANSWERING THE CALL OF THE CHILD **The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Building a Hopeful World for Children**

OUR BELIEF

Every child has an inherent, inalienable right to a safe, secure, and sustainable world free from fear, harm, and deprivation. Our sacred duty is to care for each child's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Across faiths and sacred traditions, children are considered precious gifts, and our universal responsibility is to protect and nurture them.

THE REALITY WE FACE

Every year, half of the world's children – around one billion – experience violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation, both physically and online. Almost half of these children are trapped in war and violent conflict zones, exposed to grave human rights violations, injury and even death. Children also account for over 40 percent of forcibly displaced and stateless persons worldwide due to conflict, insecurity, and climate change disasters. Uprooted from their homes and communities, these children face exploitation, trafficking and recruitment by armed groups.

Displaced children make up a significant percentage of the 1.4 billion children worldwide who lack any form of social protection, leaving them vulnerable to disease, poor nutrition and poverty. The plight of the world's children is further exacerbated by the current polycrisis—including food insecurity and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic—that threatens their physical, mental, and psychosocial wellbeing and future prospects.

THE CALL OF THE CHILD

Our voices exist across your communities, asking not for extraordinary measures, but for fundamental rights: safety, education, secure and sustainable environments, and the opportunity to grow in faith, responsibility, and dignity. Our call travels further than borders, cultures, religions, genders, and backgrounds, trying to remind you of your sacred mission to protect and nurture us. We deserve to have a voice, and we deserve to be part of the decisions that affect our lives. At the GNRC Sixth Forum, as children, we persuade you to listen to our voices, which express our ideas, concerns, and willingness to work together, and the urgency for us to become one humanity.

ANSWERING THE CALL OF THE CHILD

Gathered here in Abu Dhabi, we pledge to heed and answer this call as leaders and practitioners from diverse religious and spiritual traditions, members of the GNRC, representatives of governments, the United Nations, NGOs, educational institutions, and civil society, and as adults who deeply care about the future.

We recognize that despite numerous promises, treaties, pacts, accords, actions and initiatives, world leaders, faith actors, and adults have yet to secure a world where children's fundamental rights are universally upheld. Embracing our religious and moral duty, and our traditions and family values, we pledge to highlight the needs of the child, and to do our utmost to build a safe, secure, and sustainable world where every child feels protected, valued, and empowered, leaving no child behind.

We call on all people of faith, conscience, goodwill, and means to urgently unite for this purpose and to answer the call of the child with compassionate and dedicated action.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

With commitment and renewed resolve, we pledge to implement the GNRC Sixth Forum Abu Dhabi Plan of Action:

1. **To Build a Safe World for Children:** We will work to strengthen caregivers—in particular, families and teachers—to ensure inclusive child protection systems, policies, and practices to prevent violence, abuse, and exploitation both offline and online. We will support children’s mental and spiritual health and create safe spaces where they can express themselves and be heard. We will promote dialogue across religions, cultures, and generations to prevent crimes against children, eliminate harmful norms and build resilient communities.
2. **To Build a Secure World for Children:** We will do our utmost to raise a new generation of interfaith leaders to counter hatred, apathy, estrangement, and radicalization into violent extremism. We will strive to lend our voices to diplomatic efforts and dialogue aimed at ending wars and conflicts, and fostering loving, inclusive communities that nurture ecosystems of peace, understanding, and social cohesion with respect and appreciation for diversity.
3. **To Build a Sustainable World for Children:** To build a sustainable world, we will encourage responsible living and advocate for child-centered policies that address social and economic inequalities, climate change, and environmental preservation. We will promote values-based education, empower children to be stewards of our planet, and end child poverty.

OUR PLEDGE TO THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

We have heard your call. We express our gratitude and celebrate your presence. We will answer and act now together.

Through prayer and action, we pledge to do our utmost to create a world where every child’s dignity is honored, every family and community is empowered, every right is upheld, and every voice is heard. We will work together across faiths and sacred traditions, expand our partnerships, and invest at the grassroots level to place the child’s best interests and voice at the center of all we do.

Our programs will be child-centered, designed with and for children, prioritizing those who need our interventions the most. We pledge to do our utmost to end harmful practices, especially those justified in the name of religion. Building on two and a half decades of interfaith collaboration for children, we will take forward our commitment to protecting all children, encouraging meaningful child participation on issues concerning them, and promoting their holistic development with a focus on mental wellbeing, while affirming the dignity of every child.

We pledge to monitor and evaluate our impact continuously. We will hold ourselves accountable and ensure that our actions reflect our dedication to creating a better, brighter, and hopeful future for children everywhere.

We express our deepest gratitude to Arigatou International and the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities for convening and hosting this Forum in these difficult times, and to the United Arab Emirates for its support and leadership on child safety. Together, we pledge to build a hopeful world where every child can thrive. May our prayers and actions be blessed with success.

November 21, 2024

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates