

High Level Global Conference on the Universal Prohibition of Corporal Punishment

30 May – 1 June 2018

Malta

Concept note

The agreement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was a watershed moment where world leaders committed to a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. Countries and stakeholders agreed that this plan will be implemented in a collaborative partnership, pledging that no one will be left behind. The agreement seeks to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality. This includes children and a vision for a better world - a world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation.

Sustainable Development Goals target 16.2 explicitly commits to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. This global commitment builds on the momentum secured by Sweden's initiative in hosting the first High Level Intergovernmental Conference in 2014 and the subsequent High Level Global Conference organised by Austria in 2016. It also reiterates the commitments enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child whereby State parties bound themselves to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, abuse or maltreatment.

This 3rd High Level Global Conference on the Universal Prohibition of Corporal Punishment will continue bringing to the fore this issue that impinges on children, and violates their rights and dignity across the globe. The conference will focus on the fundamental components of a comprehensive and effective approach to ending corporal punishment, in all its settings. Specifically, the conference will draw attention to:

Enacting comprehensive legislation – While noting that it cannot stand alone, the legal prohibition of all forms of violence against children, in all settings, is indispensable. Different paths to law reform can be followed and these include a process initiated by the Government; a process initiated by parliamentarians with cross-party support; a process initiated through judicial decisions by courts; or processes and mobilisation promoted by civil society, professional groups or other actors.

Awareness-raising, information and social mobilisation – An inclusive and wide-ranging social mobilisation campaign is critical before, during and after the enactment of legislation prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment. Campaigns are critical to build support for implementation and to promote a change in attitudes and behaviour condoning violence, particularly as a form of discipline. These campaigns need to be effective and culturally sensitive. They also need to reflect the diversity of actors involved including political figures, human rights institutions, civil society, professional associations, the media and religious and community leaders.

Capacity-building and guidance for professionals working with and for children – The role of professionals working with and for children remains central, together with the identification of what factors help and hinder their work, and how investment in capacity-building and concrete guidance pays dividends and contributes towards promoting the rights and wellbeing of children.

The contribution made by professionals in health, education, justice, police and social care services remains crucial in upholding human rights including but not limited to supporting child victims in their healing, recovery and reintegration, access to justice, and the fight against impunity. Moreover, special attention should be given to the promotion of multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral cooperation. Institutional capacities must continually be enhanced, wherever possible, with appropriate human rights mechanisms put in place.

Prioritising prevention – Prevention remains a priority and in this regard the promotion of positive parenting and the investment in early childhood initiatives and non-violent discipline play a vital role in preventing and accelerating progress towards the elimination of corporal punishment. We thus need to focus on effective early childhood and positive parenting programmes and how barriers to implementing them can be overcome.

Reviewing progress and sustaining positive change – Surveys of prevalence and attitudes to corporal punishment that monitor trends over time, including as a follow-up to law enactment, are essential to understand the phenomenon and how best to tackle it effectively. Examples of where such data has been gathered, along with noteworthy trends and disparities (where relevant) between countries and regions, need to be noted and used to identify best practices.

Child participation and influence – The meaningful, safe and ethical participation of children can influence legislation; shape advocacy, and drive mobilization and awareness-raising initiatives. Child participation is also essential in informing initiatives and materials devised to promote positive parenting. Moreover, the views of children and young people are also indispensable to reviewing progress achieved. It is also a right in itself.

The commitments taken by world leaders to fulfil the ambitious 2030 Agenda are a reminder of the importance and the urgency of each of these goals. The set goals cannot be truly fulfilled unless corporal punishment is relegated to history books and all children, everywhere, are free from this threat to their freedom and dignity. Together, we need to build a world free from violence for all children, everywhere, and at all times, leaving no one behind. This is an opportunity we cannot miss.