

The Written Submission of the Chinese Government on the Concept Note of the General Comment on Children's Rights and the Environment with a Special Focus on Climate Change

In recent years, climate change and loss of bio-diversity and other global environmental problems have posed severe challenges to human survival and development, and have laid bare the growing tensions in the human-Nature relationship. China holds the view that environmental issues and climate change bear on the well-being of people, children in particular, of all countries, and thus require a concerted response of the international community. With a view to fostering a community of life for man and Nature, the Chinese government is committed to prioritizing ecological conservation, pursuing a green and low-carbon path to development and exploring a new way to protect the environment, develop the economy and remove poverty all at the same time. With a consistent commitment to the principle of protecting the best interests of the child enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC), China has been protecting children's basic rights such as the rights to subsistence and development and promoting their all-round development in line with its national conditions. China would like to present its comments as follows on the concept note of the General Comment on children's

rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change:

1. **The General Comment should focus on children's rights protection.** Article 24 of CRC requires States Parties to pay attention to the risks to children's health, regarding environment as an important factor affecting children's right to health. We note that, in terms of the relationship between human rights and environmental protection, other human rights treaty bodies mainly analyze the impacts of environment from the perspective of protecting the rights to life, health, housing, food, etc. Therefore, China suggests that the General Comment should, from within the context of protecting children's rights, discuss the possible impacts of environmental problems, particularly climate change, and the actions of States Parties.

2. **The General Comment should emphasize the importance of development for children's rights protection.** The vast developing countries and the least developed countries are facing the dual tasks of improving people's well-being and protecting the environment. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change and CRC stipulate that the specific needs and special conditions of developing countries should be given full consideration. Therefore, the General Comment should strike a proper balance among important agendas such as development, environmental protection, children's rights, etc., with a special focus on the importance of environmental protection for children's rights. We suggest that the Committee discuss the relationship between children's rights and environmental protection

within the context of sustainable development and stress the key role of poverty elimination and the rights to food and clean water for realization of children's rights.

3. The General Comment should be compliant with the mandate of CRC and avoid overlapping with existing international mechanisms. Up to now, the international community has been discussing climate change mainly within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. To make sure that the General Comment is well targeted and operable and avoid resource wasting, China suggests that the Committee should ensure that the General Comment coordinates with relevant agendas of existing international mechanisms. Meanwhile, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many other international human rights treaties all stipulate that states shoulder primary responsibilities on promoting and protecting the human rights of their own people. The General Comment should follow the original and real meaning of CRC articles, give full consideration to different national conditions and not impose new obligations on States Parties.