Results from the consultation on the First Draft of the General Comment No. 26 by the National Children's Assembly in Korea

**[About the National Children’s Assembly and the consultation Process]**

The National Children’s Assembly, started in 2003, is an annual event that promotes the child’s right to participation and aims to respect and encourage the voices and opinions of various children. The participating children representing various regions suggested child-related policies to the government and conducted democratic votes to elect the members who would organise the next children’s assembly and monitor child rights.

**[Results from the consultation on the First Draft of the General Comment No.26]**

This year’s discussion took place online on January 28th, 2023, with the elected representative members from the 2021 and 2022 children’s assemblies participating. The results of the discussion were summarised in reference to the child-friendly version of General Comment 26. This document deals with a clear summary of what the government should and should not do, and includes specific case examples and arguments to support these claims.

**<What the Government should do>**

1. legislate harsh restrictions in regards to the severe air pollution issues
2. Eliminate unnecessary guidance periods and create specific and accurate restriction policies on the use of disposable products
3. Provide a sufficient amount of information regarding the children’s rights issues stemming from climate change
4. Utilise outlets such as social media to encourage children to take interest in the environment
5. Renew educational methods and policies to be compatible with the worsening environmental crisis

**< What the Government should not do>**

1. Overlook the danger of climate change and neglect children being impacted from such changes
2. Allow the hazards caused by environmental waste from MEDCs (More Economically Developed Countries) to lead to the exploitation of children’s labour in LEDCs (Less Economically Developed Countries)
3. Fail to explore all measures possible in cooperating at a international level regarding the confrontation of climate change
4. Overlook the potential and power of children and fail to support their endeavours
5. Prioritise the opinions of adults over the voices of children who are more associated with the dangers of climate change.
6. Attempt to transfer the responsibility of climate change to other parties

Currently, The Republic of Korea is not providing enough information about the correlation between climate change and children’s rights. Children are much more vulnerable to environmental change due to their weaker biological circumstances and are the generation that will eventually have to live in the remnants of the dilapidated environment. Thus, such issues are all the more critical to children more than anyone else. Nonetheless, the government neglects such notions and is failing to actively disseminate information about the children’s rights issues stemming from climate change. As a result, children are oblivious to the impact that they will experience due to environmental problems and thus find it hard to actively fight for their own rights. Thus, the government must provide adequate information about the detrimental effects that climate change brings to children and their rights.

Furthermore, such information must be naturally and easily accessible to children. For more children to take an interest in the dangers of climate change and speak up about their opinions, it is important to help children who may have not been interested in environmental issues before to be exposed to various methods that encourage them to take an interest. Even if they do not directly search for the information, a system must be established so that they will be able to be exposed to such information continuously, using methods such as child-friendly social media usage or the conducting of events appropriately designed for the child’s level.

The current environmental education for children is also deficient. The education that has been conducted so far has not only lacked the number of times but also felt somewhat formal because the same content was repeated every year. Curriculum revision, which takes place every few years, cannot keep up with the many environmental changes that occur daily. We need to provide children with more environmental education that includes a new variety of content regarding climate change, which is constantly occurring, in addition to what is already included in textbooks.

The states’ negligence and indifference to the constantly happening climate change and the thereby infringement of children’s rights are also enormous problems. For example, states are overlooking the overuse of disposable products and are inactive in regulating them. The pilot operation and guidance period before the implementation of the disposable product regulation system stagnate people's awareness of environmental changes. According to the article, most people do not know about the system during the guidance period. This suggests that the guidance system, of which original role is to raise awareness about the system, is not playing its role properly. The issues caused by such slow and loose regulations eventually return to children and infringe on children’s rights.

Air pollution caused by environmental pollution also infringes on children’s rights. When air pollution is serious, external activities are regulated, which infringes on children’s rights to development.

Therefore, states must regulate the fundamental cause of air pollution. States must know that the infringement of children’s rights to development in the name of protecting us is never a protection for us.

The shift of responsibility for environmental issues has been severe in the international community. The current international community is handing over its obligation to resolve the environmental issues to the children who will be impacted the most and whose rights are not being taken into account. As a result, the exploitation of child labor is taking place in developing countries in the process of disposing of the environmental waste of developed countries, which presents a threat to the children who will lead this planet in the future. This is a consequence caused by the lack of the international community’s collective efforts to do their best in response to climate change and the lack of responsibility for problems they have created. However, the voices of the children who are capable of raising this responsibility are not being respected. It should not be forgotten that children’s viewpoints are the key to keeping the international community alerted. Environmental pollution is like a bomb.

The international community must bear in mind that the bomb's wick continues to shorten every moment they hand over the responsibility to us. This bomb, which has been going on since the past generation, should no longer be handed over to children.

**January 28, 2023, the committee of the Korea Children's General Assembly**