Date: March 5, 2023

 Adar 12, 5783

Re: **Draft General Comment No. 26 on Children's Rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change**

1. The State of Israel respectfully submits its comments to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, regarding the draft General Comment No. 26 on Children's Rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change.
2. As part of its longstanding commitment to fulfill its obligations under the Convention and to continue its fruitful cooperation with the Committee in an open and constructive dialogue, the State of Israel welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft General Comment on the environment with a special focus on climate change.
3. The State of Israel recognizes and respects the Committee's mandate, which enables it, *inter* alia, to publish General Comments. However, Israel would emphasize that General Comments are intended to provide useful guidance to State Parties in interpreting their obligations under the Convention andto recommend effective measures and "Best Practices". As such, General Comments do not create any binding legal obligations, in and of themselves, nor do they reflect an interpretation of the Convention that is necessarily agreed upon by States Parties.
4. The following remarks reflect Israel's major observations and concerns arising from the draft General Comment and do not preclude the existence of any other issue of concern arising from the Committee's interpretation of the obligations of States Parties under the Convention. The consultation included Government Ministries, children and youth.

**General Issues**

1. Israel appreciates the Draft General Comment's adherence to the advantages and contribution of nature and the environment to children's development, and advocates for the application of nature-based solutions. Though mentioned in the Comment, we believe that this subject should be better reflected in the General Comment. In this regard, among the Israeli Government's best practices is the allocation of millions of NIS by the Ministry of Environmental Protection for the advancement of tree planting to provide shading and to cool urban spaces. In 2022 alone, 25 million NIS (approx. 6.8 million USD) were invested for the implementation of urban space cooling by tree planting and shading.
2. Israel would like to draw the Committee's attention to the narrow scope of references to extreme weather and climate conditions and disasters, which were referred to only in the context of adaptation measures. Israel perceives the reoccurrence of extreme weather and climate conditions as a vital threat to a broad spectrum of children's rights, from basic rights such as the rights to survival, life, food and clean water to other rights such as the right to adequate standard of living, education, to be heard, rest, play, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities, and etc. Though mentioned in paragraphs 106-107, we believe that this subject should be addressed throughout the General Comment.

**The Right to Education**

1. The Israeli Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environmental Protection, have been undertaking an extensive educational reform aiming to design, develop and implement a new climate change curriculum. Designated teams at the Ministry of Education are working to develop climate change educational resources that are already available for teachers on a new dedicated climate change portal. In addition to the extensive consultations with climate change academic experts, the Ministry of Education’s work is also informed by systematic literature review aiming to learn from other countries’ experiences.
2. The goals of the climate change education reform are to provide knowledge, values and skills relevant to children's ability to deal with climate change, its causes and biological, environmental, social and economic repercussions; develop personal and social resilience for pupils to be prepared for climate change adverse effects; expand the opportunities for self-expression and agency via pupil initiatives and innovative projects to provide solutions and to tackle climate challenges, and bolster authentic interdisciplinary learning through problem solving.
3. Climate change education will be formally implemented from kindergarten through to the 12th grade. This process is gradually taking place across the education system and will be finalized during 2023 and includes 30 hours of annual climate related study per pupil.
4. In 2021, the Ministry of Environmental Protection allocated 15 million NIS (approx. 4 million USD) for youth movements and organizations to promote climate change action. A designated plan which was initiated by the Ministry in cooperation with the Council of Youth Movements and the Ministry of Education, promotes building teen coalitions to lead moves for policy change nationally and globally.
5. As a part of the climate change education reform, Israel is proud to have implemented the World’s Largest Lesson in 2022, advancing the use of the Sustainable Development Goals and promoting environmental change via Goal 13, to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

**Paragraph-Specific Comments**

1. **Paragraph** 27 *-* In order to adhere to children’s psychosocial, emotional and mental health problems and suffering caused by environmental harm, Israel recommends that the climate change educational materials should be tailored to the children's development and age. Doing so in its climate change education reform, Israel has helped developing personal and social resilience for pupils to be better prepared for dealing with climate change repercussions*.*
2. **Paragraph** 30 *-* Israel recommends considering conducting research on climate change and children's health, with a special focus on the physical, mental and emotional health of children with disabilities.
3. **Paragraphs 31-38** *-* These paragraphs provide different measures to promote environmental values as part of the right of the child to education. Israel would like to suggest adding online learning measures that were used during the COVID-19 Pandemic, as one of the educational tools to be used throughout the year, as well as in extreme weather conditions, to enable studying when schools are out of reach. While implementing on-line learning, educators should be mindful of possible side effects of such tools, such as fatigue, isolation and loneliness of children in order to prevent mental health harm.
4. **Paragraphs** **56-57** - As a part of the implementation of the children's right to be heard, The *Local Authorities (Youth Department Manager and Youth and Pupils Council) Law* 5771-2011 stipulates that in each local education authority, a pupils and youth council will be established that shall be elected by pupils and youth residing in the locality.

Furthermore, since 2020 the Ministry of Justice has been conducting an open dialogue with Israel's National Student and Youth Council and the Ministry of Education. In the context of this dialogue, Youth Council representatives choose several subjects voted on by the Council to focus on annually. In 2023 the Youth Council chose the Climate Change issue and a round table discussion was conducted, with relevant government and civil society representatives.

1. **Paragraph 67 -** With regard to the reduction of child plaintiffs' burden of proof, Israel would like to suggest improving the transparency in the Courts and the availability of information in the judicial system, rather than focusing on changing the burden of proof, which might have major and unforeseen latitudinal implications. As a matter of good practice, in Israel a number of environmental lawsuits have already been filed by the State, taking into account future generations and calculating damages that last up to 100 years ahead.
2. **Paragraphs 71-74** - Israel is deeply committed to ensuring a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for all and is proud to be at the forefront of advancing such efforts. Israel voted in the General Assembly in favour of the resolution to recognize the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right.[[1]](#footnote-1) In its statement at the General Assembly, Israel had noted its position regarding the legal status of this right.[[2]](#footnote-2)
3. **Paragraph** 73 **-** The draft General Comment obliges the States to phase out the use of coal, oil and natural gas immediately. As the immediate phase out of all fossil fuels may present challenges for certain states, we suggest that the General Comment recommend to phase down the use of coal, oil and natural gas, with the aim of their phase out and a move to renewable energies.
1. General Assembly Resolution No. A/76/L.75. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For the text of the statement please see *General Assembly Seventy-sixth session 97th plenary meeting Official* *Records* [A/76/PV.97](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/442/19/PDF/N2244219.pdf?OpenElement) (28 July, 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)