

Doha Declaration

In cooperation and coordination between:

- The League of Arab States (LAS),
- The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children,
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,
- United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for the Middle-East and North Africa,
- The Supreme Council for Family Affairs in Qatar, hosting the event,

And with reference to Resolution #252 of the Baghdad Summit (March 2012) which adopted the Marrakech Declaration issued at the Fourth Arab High Level Conference on the Rights of the Child (December 2010) as an action plan whereby Member States have committed to the enhancement of the Status of the Child over the next five years in the Arab region.

A workshop on the adoption of the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure was held in Doha, Qatar, on 3-4 June, 2012, with the participation of delegations from eighteen Arab countries including Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Algeria, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Iraq, Oman, occupied Palestinian territory, Qatar, Comoros, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania, Yemen, and Save the Children, as well as a number of civil society organizations.

Participants emphasized the importance of the following:

- Welcoming the adoption of the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which provides the base for effective actions against child rights violations;
- Taking the necessary steps to ratify the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure;
- Launching comprehensive dialogue at the national level to promote the ratification of the third Optional Protocol and foster its translation into child protection measures;
- Committing to child protection, taking into account child's best interest, as per the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two Optional Protocols;

- Following up on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2006 United Nations Study on Violence against Children, and of the Comparative Arab report on implementing the recommendations of the above mentioned study;
- Strengthening the role of National Institutions for Human Rights, facilitating the establishment of Independent National Mechanisms for receiving complaints at national level, monitoring child rights violations as well as establishing hot lines for child protection, ombuds mechanisms and coordination mechanisms for children's protection;
- Urging Member States that have not yet ratified the first two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to do so, and to withdraw their reservations to the Convention while welcoming the recent initiatives taken by some Arab States to withdraw theirs, and to ratify the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communication procedure;
- For the protocols not to contradict with Islamic law;
- Supporting and strengthening national child protection systems to include prevention, reporting and responding to cases of violence against children.

Doha, 4 June 2012

Doha Recommendations

1. Urging Member States to ratify the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, regarding complaint filing;
2. Urging Member States to establish independent national mechanisms such as Ombudsman compatible with the Paris Principles and Procedures for the Protection of Children's Rights;
3. Urging Member States that have not yet ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention to do so before the end of 2012. As well as encouraging and urging States to withdraw their reservations to the Convention and its protocols, especially those that are incompatible with the underlying principles of the Convention;
4. Requesting LAS to cooperate with the UNICEF Regional Office to work on/with regard to an introductory guide (advocacy tool) containing information about the third Optional Protocol and the importance of its ratification by countries of the region, as well as containing an assessment of the feasibility of establishing "Ombudsman mechanisms". This introductory guide will be presented in the next session of the Arab Childhood committee;
5. Requesting LAS to hold an event in the upcoming session of Ministers Council of Arab Social Affairs, to launch the directory introduction in the presence of representatives from UNICEF Regional Office, the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Doha 4 June, 2012