

Joint oral statement on behalf of Baha'i International Community, Dominicans for Justice and Peace, Franciscans International, the International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE), the International Institute Maria Ausiliatrice, International Movement ATD Fourth World, Pax Romana, and VIDES International to the 10th session of the Human Rights Council for the Discussion on the Convention of the Rights of the Child
11 March 2009

Mr. President, Honourable Delegates, and Friends,

I take the floor today in the name of 8 NGOs: **Baha'i International Community, Dominicans for Justice and Peace, Franciscans International, the International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE), International Institute Maria Ausiliatrice, International Movement ATD Fourth World, Pax Romana, and VIDES International.**

Our primary concern today is that, even before the current financial crisis, there were millions of children for whom the concept of 'rights' remained an empty promise. These children are those who, along with their families, live in extreme poverty and social exclusion in both the South and the North, and who endure multiple rights violations – their families torn apart by poverty, their potential to live a decent life forever jeopardized by malnutrition, disease, and lack of education.

The fact that after 40 years of overall economic growth, such a large percentage of our children continue to grow up in such conditions cannot help but raise questions about our financial and economic policies and the values that inspire them. First a food crisis, and now this economic crisis – how many more do we need before we begin to seek new approaches?

We feel that the very constructive consultations that have taken place on the draft guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights constitute a step in the right direction. The January 2009 technical seminar suggested that they be action-oriented, based on the lessons learned in implementing the rights that are priorities in overcoming extreme poverty. If revised in this spirit, they will provide governments at the national and local levels a comprehensive guide for the development of new policies and programmes that have the potential to ensure that the rights of children and their parents are met, and thus break the vicious cycle of inter-generational transmission of extreme poverty.

As a number of speakers have already mentioned, articles 12 and 15 are basic principles of the CRC that deserve more attention. In countries around the world, children and young people even in very poor communities are helping to clean up the environment, care for children who are AIDS orphans, and identify children who are out of school and support them in coming back into the education system. Children often spend a great deal of time with other children and thus, can offer the first signals of children's rights violations, but also ideas and actions to change the situation. To reinforce national development, governments should take the time to identify children's

initiatives, through NGO's and other organizations working directly with children, with special attention to also involving those who are socially excluded. With this knowledge, and through consultative processes, they can establish mechanisms for their involvement in the development and implementation of local and national development strategies. Some countries have had successful experiences with mechanisms such as children's advisory councils and the inclusion of children and young people in local development committees.

We encourage governments at all levels to learn from these positive examples, and to work with civil society organizations in finding ways to implement them within their own contexts. It will be to the benefit of the country as a whole.

Thank you.