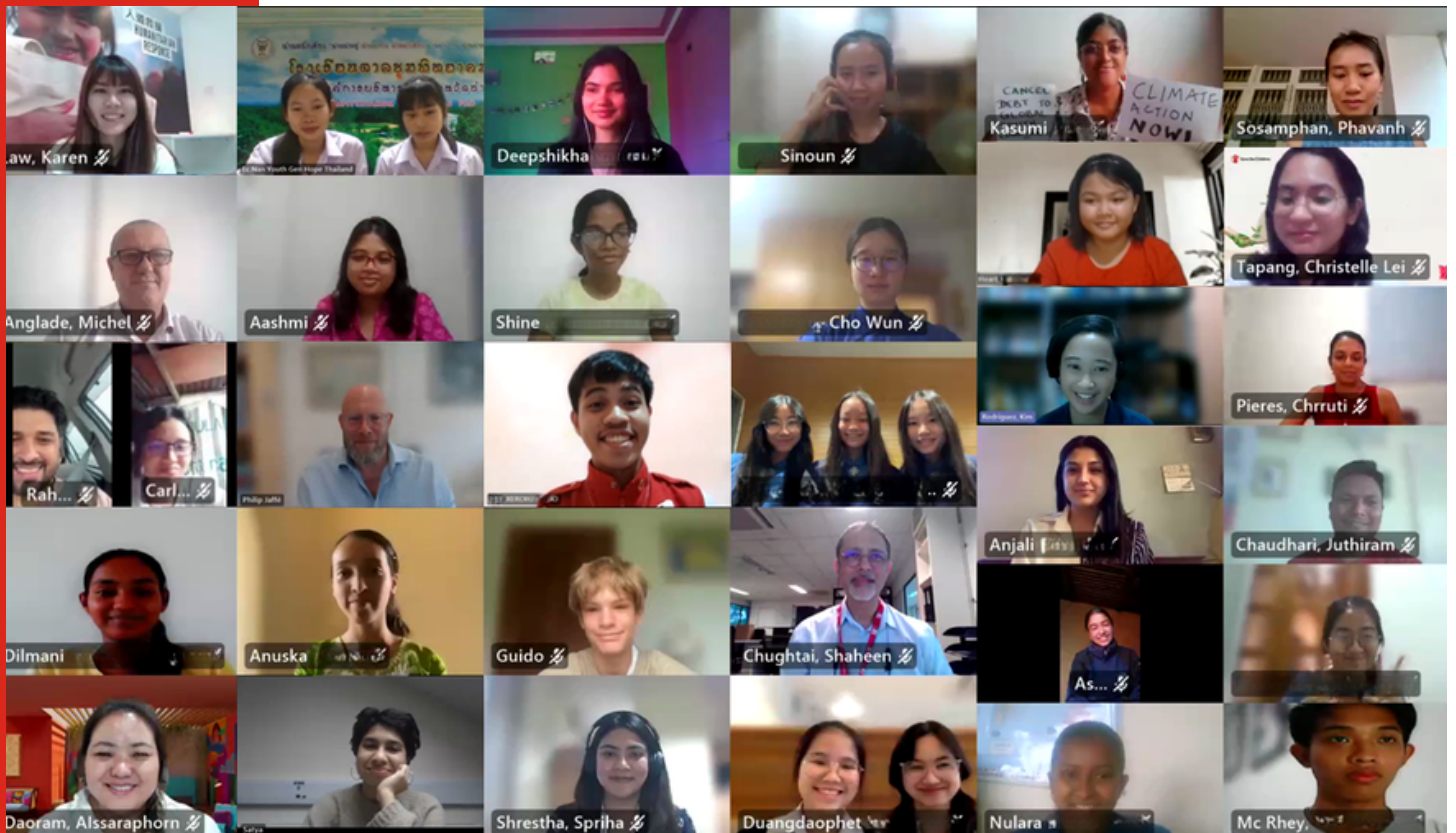




Save the Children



11 APRIL 2024, ONLINE MEETING

Dialogue between young climate campaigners and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Around 25 child and youth climate campaigners from Cambodia, Hong Kong, Laos, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand met online with Dr. Philip Jaffé, a member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, to discuss concerns on child rights in relation to the climate crisis and how the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other important documents and processes can be leveraged to uphold their rights and demand action and accountability.

REFLECTIONS FROM CHILDREN ON THEIR RIGHTS IN RELATION TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Extreme weather events such as rising temperatures, increased frequency and intensity of heatwaves, drought, typhoons, and hailstorms, and destructive disasters negatively affect the lives of young people through the following:

- **School closure** – children miss school days due to typhoons, flooding, and extreme heat or cold causing delays on learning progress and limits their opportunity for a better future. In some instances, those who are forced to drop out of school due to displacement lose the motivation to return or continue studying due to the lack of resources.
- **Health risks** – extreme weather events coupled with pollution contribute to the increase in viral diseases, respiratory illnesses, and serious health problems. Scorching heat leads to health risks such as heat stroke, dehydration, and fainting from heat exhaustion and waterborne diseases are also on the rise during the rainy season.
- **Disasters** – the devastating impact of disasters caused by climate change, typhoons, floods and landslides have become more ferocious and frequent, destroying homes, infrastructure, and livelihood sources and displacing countless families with children often bearing the brunt.
- **Food insecurity and malnutrition** – farmers face challenges in harvesting enough crops due to the drought, leading to food shortages and increased prices. This lessens children's access to nutritional food sources and increases their chances of malnutrition and stunting and thereby impeding their growth and development.
- **Child marriage** – the climate crisis and its impacts on health, food, and livelihood exacerbates already alarming rates of child marriages, especially in vulnerable communities.
- **Eco anxiety** – due to the fear caused by disasters and food shortages, children are developing eco or climate anxiety. Young people are worried about having a safe future and can be seen through the rise and prevalence of depression among children fueled by eco anxiety and feelings of helplessness.
- **Separation from parents and caregivers** – parents and caregivers are separated from their children due to the destruction of their livelihood sources as an impact of climate crisis. This increases the need to migrate to other cities or even neighboring countries to find jobs and be able to provide for their families.

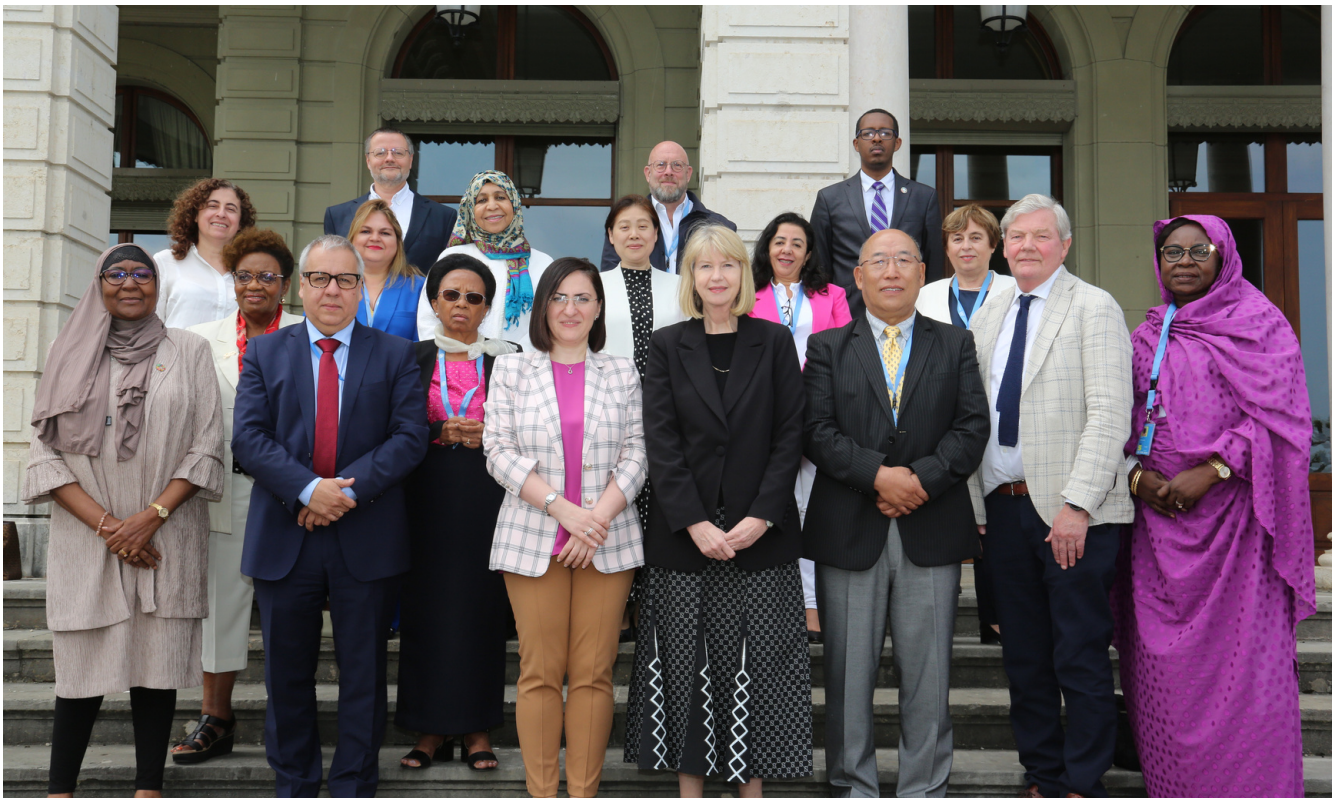
CALL TO ACTION

PARTICIPANTS FROM THE DIALOGUE SHARED THEIR URGENT CALL TO ADDRESS THE IMPACTS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS THAT HINDER THEIR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT:

- **Promote equal opportunities for child participation** – spaces where children can participate in decision-making are still limited as it is seen as a process that should only be for adults. In instances where participation is encouraged, the opportunity often does not reach children who are at the forefront of these situations. More formats should also be explored to ensure inclusive participation of children from different walks of life, including those with disabilities.
- **Ensure protection of children and youth environmental rights defenders** – in addition to creating safe spaces where children can express their opinions, ensuring the protection of those who choose to participate must also be prioritized. Young climate justice activists, environmental and human rights defenders must be provided with enough support and resources including access to information and legal support. In some countries, children are unable to identify themselves as activists due to safety concerns and are traumatized by how other youth activists have been treated.
- **Advocate for national policies and regional and international cooperation** – the enforcement or creation of specific national policies could prevent the struggles children are going through because of the climate crisis and demand accountability from those who commit destructive actions. Cooperation across borders must also be encouraged to exchange experiences and expertise, including the implementation of climate-related laws.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

"Given the path that we are on, without the passion of children as human rights advocates and defenders, I am not sure that there will be many future generations." - **Dr. Philip Jaffé, UN CRC Member**



Dr. Philip Jaffé explained to the participants what the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is, their mandates, and how these can be used to uphold children's rights, raise their concerns, and demand for accountability.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has 18 members coming from different regions in the world, including Asia, and they serve as the guardians of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which is the most ratified human rights treaty in the world. They meet three times a year in Palais Wilson in Geneva, Switzerland.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has four main mandates:

1. **Reviewing countries and producing Concluding Observations** – the committee reviews countries who have ratified the convention every 5 years through a submitted report that contains progress in terms of promoting the convention for the children in their territory. Additional data is submitted by different agencies and organizations, and children are highly encouraged to provide the committee with information about the situation in their country when it is up for review. Aside from the meeting with governments, discussions are also held with delegations of children, civil society organizations, and other groups. Once all information is received and discussions are completed, the committee produces Concluding Observations which are like school report cards that highlights what the country is doing well, pointing out gaps that should be addressed, and setting out a roadmap for the country to follow in their next reporting.
2. **Conduct Day of General Discussion** – a day of general discussion is convened every two years on a specific topic that the committee will focus on for the next few years. Children and children's rights experts from all over the world join to engage in dialogues and exchanges.
3. **Produce General Comments** – in line with the topic of focus, General Comments are produced by the committee to serve as authoritative guidance to the state. While these are non-binding, they provide information on how children's rights around a certain issue should be addressed. These are useful documents in advocacy as it lays out the law and the ideal situation that states should be striving for.
4. **Facilitate Complaint Mechanisms** – in countries that have ratified the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, the committee serves like a court where children can submit complaints if they think their rights are being violated and their government and justice system have not taken their complaints seriously.

In addition to these mandates, the committee strives to support children in advocating on specific issues and recommends for children to:

- Maintain a network for sharing best practices and learnings
- Utilize documents and guidelines, such as General Comments, and processes as tools to inform children's advocacy work
- Engage in other processes such as the Universal Periodic Review and the Voluntary National Review to generate evidence and recommendations supporting the mitigation of climate crisis impacts on children's rights
- Collaborate with organizations like Save the Children to ensure safe and meaningful participation in dialogues and processes that represent children's constituency at the national, regional, and global level.