

## **“Protect our Children”**

### **Response to the UN Secretary-General’s Call on Countries to Prioritize Children’s Education, Food, Health and Safety amid the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*Initiative launched by the EU, GRULAC and the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs\**

We strongly support the appeal by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres for countries to prioritize children’s education, food, health and safety amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, we welcome the release of the Policy Brief of the United Nations Secretary-General as well as the complementary *Agenda for Action* issued by UNICEF, which is aimed at protecting the most vulnerable children.

We express our deep concern regarding the adverse effects that the COVID-19 pandemic is presently having and will continue to have on children’s well-being, development and protection, including their access to education, food, safety and health, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

We are aware that the measures introduced to prevent the spread of COVID-19 can expose children to numerous protection risks.

We are concerned about the damaging effects the pandemic is expected to have on children in the poorest countries, on the poorest households within countries, and on girls within poorest households, as well as the devastating risks caused by the pandemic for children in humanitarian and armed conflict-affected contexts.

We are mindful that the effects of the pandemic and the preventive measures taken may pose a challenge to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring the full enjoyment of the rights of the child. In that sense, we reiterate our firm commitment to leave no-one behind; to leave no child behind.

We must therefore work together to protect all children and act now to prevent and mitigate each of the risks they face, to ensure access to inclusive and quality education, nutrition and health care, as well as strengthen social protection systems. We must prevent and combat all forms of violence, including domestic violence, abuse and sexual exploitation of children online and offline, cyberbullying, and bridge the digital divide. We acknowledge the specific effects the crisis has on girls’ access to education and on gender-based violence. We should be doing everything

we can to cushion the impact on children's well-being, especially for those whose vulnerability has increased as a result of the current circumstances.

We commit to fully respect, promote and protect the rights of all children, reduce the negative impacts during and after the pandemic, as well as ensure respect for the best interests of the child while striving to take into account, where possible, children's views.

We recognize that children and young people are positive change agents and commit to partner with them now and in the future, to ease the lasting impact COVID-19 will have on human health, society and the economy and secure a healthy, safe and sustainable future and planet for all in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are committed to working together in solidarity, across nations and generations, to address global challenges. We welcome the work of the UN system working across all settings and acting as one UN in upholding the rights of the child in the short as well as long terms. We further commit to continue working with all partners at all levels to ensure that children can reach their full potential and to build a better future.

\*63 Members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs joined the initiative.

Signatories (as of 29 April 2020)

1. Afghanistan
2. Albania
3. Algeria
4. Andorra
5. Angola
6. Antigua and Barbuda
7. Argentina
8. Armenia
9. Australia
10. Austria
11. Azerbaijan
12. Bahamas
13. Bahrain
14. Bangladesh
15. Barbados
16. Belarus
17. Belgium
18. Belize
19. Benin
20. Bhutan
21. Bolivia
22. Bosnia and Herzegovina
23. Botswana
24. Brazil
25. Bulgaria
26. Burkina Faso
27. Burundi
28. Cabo Verde
29. Cambodia
30. Canada
31. Chile
32. China
33. Colombia
34. Comoros
35. Congo (Republic of)
36. Costa Rica
37. Côte d'Ivoire
38. Croatia
39. Cuba
40. Cyprus
41. Czechia
42. Denmark
43. Djibouti
44. Dominica
45. Dominican Republic
46. Ecuador
47. Egypt
48. El Salvador
49. Eritrea
50. Estonia
51. Eswatini
52. Ethiopia
53. Equatorial Guinea
54. Fiji
55. Finland
56. France
57. The Gambia
58. Georgia
59. Germany
60. Ghana
61. Greece
62. Grenada
63. Guatemala
64. Guinea
65. Guyana
66. Haiti
67. Honduras
68. Hungary
69. Iceland
70. India
71. Indonesia
72. Ireland
73. Israel
74. Italy
75. Jamaica
76. Japan
77. Jordan
78. Kazakhstan
79. Kenya
80. Korea (Republic of)
81. Kuwait
82. Kyrgyzstan
83. Laos
84. Latvia
85. Lebanon
86. Lesotho

87. Liberia
88. Liechtenstein
89. Lithuania
90. Luxembourg
91. Madagascar
92. Malawi
93. Malaysia
94. Maldives
95. Mali
96. Malta
97. Marshall Islands
98. Mauritius
99. Mexico
100. Micronesia (Federated States of)
101. Moldova
102. Monaco
103. Mongolia
104. Montenegro
105. Morocco
106. Mozambique
107. Myanmar
108. Namibia
109. Nauru
110. Nepal
111. The Netherlands
112. New Zealand
113. Nicaragua
114. Niger
115. Nigeria
116. North Macedonia
117. Norway
118. Pakistan
119. Palau
120. Panama
121. Papua New Guinea
122. Paraguay
123. Peru
124. Philippines
125. Poland
126. Portugal
127. Qatar
128. Romania
129. Rwanda
130. Saint Kitts and Nevis
131. Saint Lucia
132. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
133. Samoa
134. San Marino
135. Saudi Arabia
136. Senegal
137. Serbia
138. Seychelles
139. Sierra Leone
140. Singapore
141. Slovakia
142. Slovenia
143. South Africa
144. South Sudan
145. Spain
146. Sri Lanka
147. Sudan
148. Suriname
149. Sweden
150. Switzerland
151. Tanzania
152. Thailand
153. Tunisia
154. Turkey
155. Turkmenistan
156. Tuvalu
157. Trinidad and Tobago
158. Uganda
159. Ukraine
160. United Arab Emirates
161. United Kingdom
162. Uruguay
163. Uzbekistan
164. Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
165. Viet Nam
166. Yemen
167. Zambia
168. State of Palestine
169. European Union