



CONCEPT NOTE

Annual informal exchange between the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and States: The OPIC

May 24 2022, 13:45hrs-14:45hrs (CEST)

Venue: Palais Wilson Ground Floor Conference Room, Geneva Switzerland
(and online on Zoom)

Background information

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on a Communications Procedure (OPIC) allows **accountability for children's human rights violations**. Under this instrument, violations of the rights of the child can be brought to the attention of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) through two procedures: the communications and inquiry procedures.

Within the UN Treaty Body system, the OPIC is the most recent Optional Protocol establishing a communications procedure. It builds on and expands the existing highest standards from other treaties and therefore bears the huge potential to strengthen the implementation of the UNCRC and the realisation of children's rights on the ground. The OPIC is, first and foremost, a **unique tool that States should use to strengthen their legal systems for the protection of child rights**.

Notwithstanding the OPIC's importance and **potential to better fulfil child rights at the national level**, as of May 2022, eight years since the entry into force of the OPIC, 48 States have ratified it, 17 have signed but not yet ratified it, and 132 have taken no action.

In April 2019, on the occasion of the **5th anniversary of the entry into force of the OPIC** and the **30th anniversary of the UNCRC**, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Committee, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and Child Rights Connect¹ co-organised a **closed Roundtable Discussion**² with selected States and partners to promote States' ratification of the OPIC and increase understanding of its added value to the realisation of children's rights. The Permanent Missions (PMs) of the Slovak Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations and other international organisations in Geneva co-sponsored the event.

One of the main findings of this Roundtable Discussion is that the OPIC is still **widely unknown and/or largely misunderstood**.

¹ Child Rights Connect is an independent, non-profit global child rights network made up of more than 90 national, regional and international organisations that has been the strategic partner of the Committee and the OHCHR for the engagement of children's rights defenders in the reporting cycle. Child Rights Connect was instrumental in the creation of the OPIC and its ratification campaign that led to its entry into force in April 2014. For more information on the OPIC, please visit: <https://opic.childrightsconnect.org>

² The title of this Roundtable Discussion was "*Towards Better Implementation of the UN CRC through its Third Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure*". See here the [report on the key findings of the discussion](#).

In June 2019, following up on this Roundtable Discussion, an informal dialogue on the OPIC took place between State representatives and the Committee members in Geneva. Co-sponsored by the PMs of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Slovenia as co-chairs of the **Group of Friends on the Rights of the Child**, this event offered the opportunity to openly discuss challenges and opportunities provided by the OPIC as well as ratification and implementation experiences at the national level. It had the participation of Committee members, the OHCHR secretariat and numerous PMs.

The 2019 informal dialogue on the OPIC with States and the Committee was replicated in 2021³ and established as an annual event. Providing additional and relevant space for regular exchange, the annual informal dialogue is also a key contribution to the **strengthening of the collaboration between the Committee and States**.

Purpose and aims of the event

Child Rights Connect, the Committee and the OHCHR Secretariat in partnership with the PMs of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Slovenia as co-chairs of the Group of Friends on the Rights of the Child will organise an informal dialogue, during the [90th session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child](#), in May with State representatives on the OPIC. National human rights institutions representatives and Parliamentarians will also join the discussion. More specifically, the goal of the event is to **provide a space for informal exchange and strengthening of the collaboration between the Committee and States**:

- allowing for a better understanding of the OPIC and its added value, and
- promoting increased ratification of the OPIC while calling on States to actively support the universal ratification of this instrument.

The informal dialogue will also allow for the Committee:

- to update States on the latest trends concerning their work on the OPIC including its jurisprudence; and to provide an overview of the status of OPIC ratification.

For participants:

- to raise questions and/or concerns in relation to the OPIC directly to the members of the Committee
- to exchange and learn from other national OPIC ratification and implementation efforts and experiences.

Participants and format

The event will mainly involve State representatives, Committee members and the OHCHR Secretariat, while also strongly supporting the participation of national human rights institutions and Parliamentarians.

The short informal dialogue will take place on **Tuesday, May 24, 2022**, between **13:45 and 14.45hrs (CEST)** in a **hybrid format**. Participants will be able to join the meeting either in person, at Palais Wilson Ground Floor Conference Room, or online through Zoom.

³ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this event could not be replicated in 2020.