

20 November 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the High-level meeting on the occasion of the twenty-fifth
anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the
Child**

Excellencies,

Mr. Tony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF,

Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Under Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

Mr. Ivan Šimonovic, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights

Ms. Marta Santos Pais, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children,

Ms. Kirsten Sandberg, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,

Ms. Maud De Boer-Buquicchio, Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

And a special greeting to our young guest, Miss Teyise Dlamini from Swaziland,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We meet today to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This landmark document is the cornerstone of the promotion and protection of children's rights worldwide. It reflects our collective commitment to ensure that every child, in every society, has the right to a fair start in life.

Over the last 25 years, the Convention has created new perspectives on the place and role of children in society, while serving as the basis for important new legislation. Indeed, its provisions not only ensure special care and assistance for children, they also encourage their full participation in their communities and in all decisions affecting them.

In 2002, the General Assembly held a Special Session on children to review progress since the World Summit for Children and give a new impetus to global commitments on children's rights. This was the very first time children participated in a United Nations conference as delegates.

Addressing the Assembly, children described their vision of a world fit for them: a world where their fundamental rights are respected, without exploitation, abuse, violence, war and poverty. They spoke of a world with access to healthcare and education and a thriving environment.

As we look back today, we must ponder: how far have we come in making this vision a reality?

We should feel encouraged by the significant improvement in the living conditions of children around the world. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have focused national and international efforts, while also generating resources to support of a number of key initiatives related to children.

For example, child mortality rates for those under five have been cut in half, in part thanks to immunization campaigns and improved access to clean water and sanitation. More children than ever are attending school, with 9 in 10 children in developing countries now enrolled in primary education. Extreme poverty and hunger have also decreased.

Yet, important disparities remain. Children born into poor families, those living in conflict or post-conflict countries or those growing up in marginalized communities do not have the same opportunities to realize their full potential.

In many countries worldwide, girls still have limited access to education and are at risk for early and forced marriage. Child malnutrition remains a serious issue, as are the phenomena of child labour, child trafficking and child prostitution.

We must continue investing in the rights of all children across the world — no matter their gender, ethnicity, race, disability or economic status. Children are the fundamental building block for achieving the future we want. Indeed, by strengthening their capacity to mature into engaged, responsible and productive adults, society as a whole stands to benefit.

Excellencies,

The deadline to achieve the MDGs is quickly approaching. We must now build on their success and ensure that children's rights and well-being are fully reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.

With targets on reducing inequality, ending violence against children and combating child poverty, the proposals of the Open Working Group provide a solid basis to move forward. It will also be critical to maintain a holistic approach and address other factors that can undermine development gains, such as poverty, violence, conflict, weak governance and the absence of rule of law.

Equally important is the need to ensure mobilisation of the resources that will be required to implement a truly transformative development agenda that puts the welfare of all people, especially the children, at the forefront.

In this regard, investing in children and youth should be central to discussions on financing the post-2015 development agenda. At the global level, this should translate into new and innovative partnerships between governments, the private sector, civil society and financial institutions.

Firm domestic resource commitments for children will also be critical as economies grow and demands for social interventions become more diversified. Governments need to ensure that the benefits of growth are shared equitably across groups and generations, focusing in particular on the needs of the most vulnerable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Twenty-five years after the adoption of the CRC, we must ask ourselves, “Is the world a better place for children?” This afternoon’s interactive panel discussion will provide an opportunity to further explore this question.

As we reflect on how the next twenty-five years can result in the further promotion of the universal realization of children’s rights, let me conclude with these inspirational words from the children who addressed the Assembly in 2002:

“We want a world fit for children, because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone.”

I thank you for your attention.