

The Final Outcome Document: The Influence of the Child Rights Caucus

Although the outcome of the final negotiations on the outcome document were disappointing to many of us in the Child Rights Caucus, we need to put these disappointments into context, and recognize the substantial ways that the Caucus positively influenced the document during the preparatory process.

Probably most significant is the Caucus' success in broadening the scope of the document to encompass the full range of children's rights. During the early stages of the preparatory process, the Caucus insisted that the outcome document should reflect not only the health and education concerns that were the focus of the 1990 Summit, but also issues of abuse, violence and exploitation, including child labor, trafficking, sexual exploitation, juvenile justice, the impact of armed conflict, etc.

In this respect, the final outcome document is profoundly improved over the first draft document produced in December of 2000. While the first draft featured 21 key goals for children, only two dealt with protection issues – one related to the worst forms of child labor, and another dealing with violence against children. In contrast, the final outcome document featured protection from abuse, exploitation and violence as one of four priority areas, establishing 5 key goals in this area and more than 47 actions and strategies. This is a major accomplishment of which we should be proud.

A comparison of the final outcome document to earlier drafts and the proposals that the Caucus made through its alternative text shows that many of our proposals were included in the final text. Below is a summary of those elements that the Caucus proposed in the alternative text that ultimately were included in the outcome document. Text that is taken directly (i.e. nearly verbatim) from the Alternative text is indicated with an asterisk (*).

Declaration:

- "Fight" poverty was changed to "eradicate" poverty (7 ii)
- Educate every child: "Free" and "compulsory" were added to describe the type of education that should be accessible to every child (7 v)
- Protect the earth for children: a reference to "environmental degradation" was added (7x)

Plan of Action:

- "Various forms of the family" were acknowledged (15)
- A paragraph was added regarding ending discrimination against indigenous children, children belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups. * (22)
- A reference to sexual and reproductive health care was added to a paragraph on the rights of girls and women. (23)
- A reference to pesticides was added to a paragraph on environmental problems. (26)
- A paragraph on child participation specified that programmes should be developed and implemented to promote "meaningful" participation. (32 i)

Goals, Strategies and Actions:

Promoting Healthy Lives:

- A goal was added regarding access to “reproductive health for all individuals of appropriate age” (36 g)
- A sentence was added to a paragraph regarding breast-feeding: “Provide infant-feeding counseling for mothers living with HIV/AIDS so that they can make free and informed choices.”* (37 v)
- A paragraph regarding prevention of disease and malnutrition included “and ensure that effective measures are affordable and accessible.” * (37 xi)
- A paragraph was added regarding preventing the exposure of children to harmful environmental contaminants. (37 xxv)

Education:

- A paragraph about reaching children excluded from school added a reference to children with disabilities. (40 ii)
- A paragraph regarding safe, child-friendly learning environments specified that children should be protected from violence. (40vii)
- A paragraph was added regarding measures to enable pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers to complete their education. (40x)
- A paragraph regarding teachers added a reference to “opportunities and incentives for their development.” (40 xiv)

Protecting Against Abuse, Exploitation and Violence:

- A goal related to child labor was expanded from a focus only on the worst forms of child labor to all “child labor that is contrary to accepted international standards.” (43 d)
- A reference (albeit weak) to the death penalty was included. (44 viii)
- A paragraph regarding protection and rehabilitation of children in disadvantaged situations added a reference to children working and/or living on the street. (44 xi)
- A paragraph referring to the use of child soldiers added “ensure their demobilization and effective disarmament, and implement effective measures for their rehabilitation, physical and psychological recovery and reintegration into society.” (44xxii)
- A paragraph on ending impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, states that these crimes should be excluded from amnesty provisions and that post-conflict truth and justice-seeking mechanisms should address abuses against children and include child-sensitive procedures. (44xxiii)
- A paragraph was added on providing appropriate training and education in children’s rights and protection as well as international humanitarian law to personnel involved in peacekeeping operations. (44xxv)
- A paragraph regarding refugee children and children seeking asylum included a reference to access to education and health care (44 xxviii)
- A paragraph on child labor urged “immediate” measures, and added references to rehabilitation, and social integration, free basic education and vocational training. (44xxxiii)
- Trafficking was added to the heading referring to sexual exploitation of children
- A paragraph on child trafficking and sexual exploitation added a reference to recovery and social reintegration. (44xliv)