

**A GUIDE FOR**  
**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**  
**REPORTING TO THE**  
**COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF**  
**THE CHILD**

**Revised 1998**

# **THE NGO GROUP FOR THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**

## **I. Background**

### **.. Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990. The Convention, which contains fifty-four articles, is a comprehensive instrument which sets out rights that define universal principles and norms for the status of children. It provides children with fundamental human rights and freedoms as well as takes into account their need for special assistance and protection due to their vulnerability. It is the only international human rights treaty to include civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Upon ratification, States commit themselves to respecting these rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is presently the most widely ratified international human rights instrument, almost all States having agreed to its principles.

### **.. Committee on the Rights of the Child**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is monitored through a system of reporting by States parties to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee is composed of ten independent experts who are elected in their personal capacity to four year terms by States parties. An equitable geographical distribution and representation of the principal legal systems is taken into consideration in their selection. A recently adopted amendment to the Convention would increase membership of the Committee to eighteen, upon formal acceptance by a two thirds majority of States parties. The Committee meets three times a year in Geneva, Switzerland. It has a small permanent secretariat at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva.

The Committee is responsible first and foremost for examining the progress made by States parties in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention. The Committee can only receive or consider information concerning countries which have ratified or acceded to the Convention. In its reporting guidelines, the Committee recommends that the preparation of reports be an opportunity to review law and policy which might prompt improvements in national law and practices. In addition, the scrutiny of these reports by independent experts should expose non-compliance with treaty obligations and such exposure and publicity should encourage change. The Committee is not mandated to examine individual complaints concerning violations of the rights of a child.

### **.. Overview of Reporting Procedures**

The basis for the Committee's review is the report that each State party is required to submit two years after ratification of the Convention. Thereafter, progress reports are required every five years. The Committee may also request a complementary report or

additional information between these periods. In cases where States parties are late in submitting their initial reports, the first periodic report is still due five years after the initial report was due (or seven years after the entry into force of the Convention in the country).

The preparation of the initial report should allow governments to conduct a comprehensive review of the measures adopted to give effect to the rights under the Convention and on the progress made on the enjoyment of these rights. The report should provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Convention and indicate the factors and difficulties that prevent full compliance with the Convention.

Although periodic reports do not need to repeat detailed information that has previously been provided to the Committee, States parties are requested to provide the Committee with information on the areas of concern that were previously identified by the Committee, the measures adopted as a follow-up to the suggestions and recommendations made by the Committee upon examination of its previous report and the obstacles encountered in the realization of these recommendations.

The Committee has issued guidelines for States to follow when drafting their initial and periodic reports (see annexes). It also requests States to submit with their reports copies of relevant legislation and judicial decisions, as well as statistical information, indicators, and relevant research.

## **.. Examination of State Parties' Reports**

Upon completion of the report, it should be sent by the State party to the Secretariat of the Committee at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland. It is then scheduled for examination by the Committee at the next available session. The Committee tries to examine reports within one year of receipt based on the order in which they are received. Due to its increasing backlog of reports, it has become almost impossible for the Committee to respect this timetable. The NGO Group is able to provide information on which reports have been submitted to the United Nations and the expected date of examination of country reports by the Committee.

The Committee then seeks written information from other sources, such as non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations. During the pre-sessional working group, a private session composed of Committee members, a preliminary review of the report is conducted and all available information is examined. The working group then prepares a list of issues to be submitted in advance to the government. Governments are requested to respond to these questions in writing before the plenary session.

The Committee then examines the report in the presence of the government during its plenary session. The Committee recommends that representatives of the government who are directly involved at the national level with the implementation of the Convention be present for such a discussion. Government representatives are invited to answer the questions and comments posed by Committee members in order to discern more fully the actual situation in the country. At the end of the dialogue, the Committee prepares

concluding observations which reflect the main points of discussion and indicate concerns and issues which would require specific follow-up action at the national level.

## **.. NGOs and the Committee**

Under Article 45(a) of the Convention, the Committee on the Rights of the Child may invite specialized agencies, UNICEF, and "other competent bodies" to provide expert advice on the implementation of the Convention. The term "other competent bodies" includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This Convention is the only international human rights treaty that expressly gives NGOs a role in monitoring its implementation. The Committee has systematically encouraged NGOs to submit reports, documentation or other information in order to provide it with a comprehensive picture as to how the Convention is being implemented in a particular country. The Committee welcomes written information from international, regional, national and local organizations. Information may be submitted by individual NGOs or national coalitions or committees of NGOs.

The NGO Group has been promoting the creation and development of national coalitions of NGOs working for children. A national coalition often allows for more effective

monitoring of the implementation of the Convention at national level due to the specialist knowledge of coalition members and the variety of points of view that may be represented. A national coalition that is broad based and representative allows NGOs working for children to cooperate and coordinate their work in certain areas. National coalitions should be composed of a wide range of organizations, including human rights, humanitarian and development, which reflect the full range of issues raised by the Convention as well as the interdependence of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. In addition, members should represent diverse jurisdictional and geographic as well as ethnic and cultural differences that may exist in a country. It is equally important that the views of children be taken into consideration.

## **II. NGO Written Submissions**

### **.. NGO contributions to the reporting process**

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has emphasized that the process of preparing the State party report should be a broad and participatory one which offers an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review of national legislation, administrative rules and procedures and practices. Although responsibility for reporting lies with the State party, NGOs may contribute to this process. The Committee has recommended that the preparation of the report be an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review of the various measures undertaken to harmonize law and policy with the Convention and that this process should "encourage and facilitate popular participation and public scrutiny of government policies" (CRC/C/57). The guidelines for the preparation of reports ask a series of questions with regards to the extent to which NGOs participated in the preparation of the report and in the implementation of the Convention. This line of thinking is pursued on a regular basis by the Committee which systematically asks in its list of issues and during its plenary session about NGO cooperation with the State party.

In some countries, there has been consultation with NGOs in the preparation of the State party report and their contributions have been incorporated into the official State party report. This collaboration takes many forms including sending NGOs letters with requests for information on the implementation of the Convention, holding a meeting or meetings with NGOs in order to solicit their views or to discuss copies of a draft report, or creating joint government-NGO drafting committees. In most countries, however, NGOs do not have the possibility to contribute to the reporting process or their views are not taken fully into account. In addition, NGOs need to be cautious about maintaining their independence. Reporting to the Committee is an obligation of the State party and NGOs should not write the report for them.

### **.. Preparation of an NGO report**

The Committee on the Rights of the Child seeks specific, reliable and objective information from NGOs in order to obtain a serious and independent assessment of the

progress and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Convention. This is due to the fact that the reports submitted by States parties tend to present the legislative framework and often do not consider the implementation process. It is therefore difficult for the Committee to obtain a complete picture of the situation of children in the concerned State. The consideration of NGO information is therefore an essential element in the monitoring process. The Committee seeks information that deals with all the different areas covered by the Convention in order to effectively monitor its implementation in a country. The Committee is also interested in receiving information on areas where the government report does not give sufficient information and on areas of concern not covered or, in the opinion of the NGOs, covered incorrectly or misleadingly.

NGO reports prepared by coalitions rather than individual NGOs are much more difficult to disregard or discredit and therefore tend to lend greater legitimacy to information submitted on breaches of rights. Governments can easily claim that information submitted by one NGO should not be taken seriously because that particular NGO is politically motivated, linked to the opposition, not reliable, or is basing its criticism on fantasy rather than fact. It is much more difficult for a government to discredit a report prepared by a group of NGOs. In addition, a single comprehensive report allows Committee members who are under intense time pressure to familiarize themselves with the relevant issues, to study only one NGO document from, for example, twenty organizations, rather than twenty reports from twenty organizations.

## **.. Putting together a report**

States parties undertake in Article 44(6) of the Convention to "make their reports widely available to the public in their own countries". Therefore NGOs (individual NGOs or national coalitions of NGOs) who are interested in preparing written information for the Committee should request a copy of the State party report from their government. If, for whatever reason, the government does not provide an NGO with a copy of the report, it may be requested from the NGO Group in Geneva. NGOs should not wait until the State party has submitted its report to the Committee before establishing a structure to monitor the implementation of the Convention. Monitoring and analyzing is an ongoing process that needs to start early. The report for the Committee should not, however, be finalized until the State party has submitted its report to the Committee in order to be able to comment on its contents.

The report should contain a section by section analysis of the State party report and should follow the Committee's "General Guidelines regarding the Form and the Content of Initial Reports" (see Annex I). Rather than an article by article approach, the guidelines require that reports follow a specific thematic structure which is based on eight clusters of articles: general measures of implementation (articles 4, 42, 44.6), definition of the child (article 1), general principles (articles 2, 3, 6, 12), civil rights and freedoms (articles 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 37(a)), family environment and alternative care (articles 5, 9, 10, 11, 18, 20, 21, 25, 27.4), basic health and welfare (articles 18, 23, 24, 26, 27), education, leisure and cultural activities (articles 28, 29, 31), and special protection

measures (articles 22, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40). In this way, the Committee will be able to compare the government report with the NGO information. The "General Guidelines regarding the Form and Content of Periodic Reports" (see Annex II) contain detailed questions which give clear indications as to what is required in order to achieve compliance with the Convention. These guidelines help to ensure that each article is given systematic scrutiny and consideration.

The aim of the NGO report should be to undertake a systematic analysis of the extent to which law, policy and practice in the State party is in compliance with the principles and standards of the Convention. The report should reflect the experience of children throughout the State party and differences in legislation, administration of services, culture and environment of different jurisdictions need to be incorporated into the report. The report should also draw upon the widest possible sources of knowledge, expertise, and experience and the views and experiences of children should be identified and incorporated into the report.

The report should be based upon the broadest possible range of information sources including current legislation and government reports on its implementation, government statistics, verbatim records of parliamentary/legislative proceedings, reports published by organizations and professional bodies working with children, published research (government, academic, NGO), books, and periodicals. Key issues should be identified through consultation with key organizations and individuals. The report should seek to analyze the implementation of legislation in order to give an accurate picture of the practice in the country. Governments have a tendency to prepare legalistic reports and NGOs have a major role to play in providing information on the practical implementation or lack of implementation of the Convention. The report should point out relevant legislation and statistics to support or contradict the information provided by the government. The information provided in the report should be directly linked to an analysis of the implementation of the Convention with clear indications as to which articles are being breached, in what way, and the consequences that this implies. It may be useful to refer to already established interpretations of what constitutes a breach of the Convention.

NGOs may also submit information that complements or supplements the State party report, particularly in areas where the government report lacks information. This information may take the form of recent reports that NGOs have produced on thematic issues (i.e. street children, working children, children in armed conflict, refugee children, the girl child, sexually exploited children etc.). Reports that focus on only one issue or on the situation of a particularly vulnerable group may also be useful. Thematic reports should also include, where appropriate, information regarding follow-up activities to global conferences on human rights and social development such as the World Summit for Children (New York), the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna), the World Conference on Women (Beijing), the Earth Summit (Rio), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen), and the World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation (Stockholm).

## .. Recommendations

NGOs should make concrete recommendations as to what can be done to improve the situation of children in their country. It would be helpful to indicate where there is a need to modify current legislation in order to bring it into line with the Convention. They should try to focus on a limited number of issues that they consider to be priorities. NGOs may also wish to indicate questions or issues that the Committee may wish to raise with the government. They should also prepare concrete recommendations as to the role that they can play in the implementation of the Convention. The Committee is particularly interested in knowing the extent to which NGOs can go to advocate for change. It often recommends in its concluding observations that governments work with local NGOs.

### ◆ Practical Information

NGO reports should be no longer than thirty pages. An abstract or a summary of the report would be helpful in order to highlight the key issues and point out the principal preoccupations related to the implementation of the Convention. Written information should be supported by facts and should not be worded in a tone that may be considered to be overly political. Subjective opinions should not be included. The aim is for a constructive dialogue rather than conflict. On the other hand, do not hesitate to point out problems and suggest concrete measures to be taken. Reports should be submitted in one of the three official working languages of the Committee (English, French, Spanish). As English is the working language of nine out of ten experts on the present Committee, documents submitted in French and Spanish should, whenever possible, be translated into English. The United Nations will not translate any documents submitted by NGOs.

Ideally, a written report should be submitted within one year after the government report has been received by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva in order to ensure that it is taken into account during the pre-sessional working group meeting. NGO reports may be submitted to the NGO Group who will ensure that the information reaches the Committee or directly to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Whenever possible, fifteen copies of the NGO report should be submitted in order for copies to be distributed to all Committee members, and the Secretariats of the Committee and the NGO Group. The NGO Group may be able to photocopy reports when this is not possible.

The report should also be submitted on a computer diskette in order for it to be entered into the electronic database consisting of NGO reports that have been submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. As parts of this database will be accessible to any interested persons through the internet, please indicate as to whether or not the NGO Group has permission to include the report in this resource. The service will be free and no remuneration will be received nor retained by the NGO Group. The report will not be made public until the consideration of the State party report is completed. NGOs should also indicate as to whether or not the members of the Committee may refer to the source of the information during their discussions with the government.



### **Main Points to Remember when Preparing a Report**

- Reports should follow Committee guidelines
- Concrete recommendations should be made
- Reports should be no more than thirty pages
- Reports must be written in English, French, or Spanish
- An abstract or a summary of the report in English is essential
- Reports should be sent to the Committee within a year after the government report has been

submitted

## **III. Pre-Sessional Working Group of the Committee**

### **.. Composition**

The pre-sessional working group of the Committee is an opportunity to conduct a preliminary review of the State party report and to examine supplementary and alternative information. The working group meets three times a year to identify in advance the main questions to be discussed with States parties who will appear before the Committee during the next session. The working group normally meets in Geneva during a five day period directly following a regular session of the Committee. As it is a working group, all members of the Committee may not be present.

The pre-sessional working group meets in private. This means that no governmental representatives, media, or outside observers may attend. It should be noted, however, that representatives from relevant inter-governmental organizations (e.g. UNICEF, ILO, UNHCR, WHO, UNESCO) are invited to participate. NGOs who submit written information in advance, considered relevant by the Committee, may also be invited to participate in the working group. In principle, NGOs are only invited to attend the meeting related to the country on which they are able to provide expert advice. These meetings last approximately three hours for each country being considered, either from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm or from 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm.

### **.. NGO Participation**

Interested NGOs should state clearly in the cover letter accompanying the report that they wish to participate in the working group meeting. Only a limited number of NGOs from each country will be invited to attend. The Committee will base this decision

on an evaluation of the written information on the country provided in advance by NGOs or coalitions. It will examine which information seems relevant for the examination of the State party report and which NGOs or coalitions seem to be in a position to provide factual information on specific aspects of the implementation of the Convention in the country. The Committee will then issue a letter acknowledging receipt of the written information and inviting the NGO to be present at the date and time when the working group will consider the relevant report.

Participation of NGOs or coalitions in the working group allows Committee members to ask follow-up questions and obtain an alternative view of the government report. NGOs are encouraged to provide the Committee with a constructive, critical analysis of both the government report and the actual situation in the country. NGOs can also help to set priorities and identify key issues for discussion with the government. The information provided by NGOs may be used in the elaboration of a list of issues which will be sent to the government. The list of issues contains additional questions to which the government are requested to respond in writing before the plenary session.

Unfortunately, the Committee is unable to provide funding for travel expenses or assist in making travel arrangements. The NGO Group, however, may be able to provide limited financing for travel and subsistence expenses in some instances for one representative of national NGOs or coalitions who have been invited by the Committee to participate in the pre-sessional working group. NGOs should send only one or two representatives from their organization to meet with the Committee. The participation of those who have elaborated the report or who have a comprehensive understanding of the situation of the rights of children in their country is highly recommended. Committee members often ask a wide range of detailed questions that only an expert can answer. Be sure to bring copies of statistics or studies that might be referred to during an oral presentation or that may interest Committee members.

## **.. Working Group Procedures**

There is no fixed procedure or approach set out for the Committee's consideration of a State party report during the working group session. This will depend largely on the adequacy or insufficiency of each report and how much information it has been possible to secure. The Chairperson usually starts the meeting by asking Committee members to introduce themselves. The Chairperson then asks the NGOs to make an introductory statement. Interpretation is available in English and French and, upon request, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, and Chinese. Signal visually to request the floor and when invited to speak, press the button in front of the microphone. Wait until the light comes on before speaking. Remember to speak slowly and clearly to allow the interpreters to follow.

In this initial intervention, NGOs should not speak for more than fifteen minutes. NGOs should give their opinion on the State party report, point out the main problems that children are facing in their country, and provide an update of any new information since the submission of written documentation. The Committee is also interested in knowing whether the government consulted with NGOs in the preparation of the report,

if the report reflects NGO concerns and if it was made widely available within the country. As stated above, working group sessions are held in private with no press releases or summary records. This allows for a certain level of confidentiality and should permit NGOs to speak freely. Although the presentation does not have to be prepared in writing, copies may be submitted to the Committee for future reference.

The Chairperson will then ask the inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) to make similar presentations. Thereafter, Committee members are invited to comment on or ask questions about the report and the presentations. Some comments will be general while others may be questions specifically directed at the NGOs or IGOs. NGOs who wish to comment or to respond to questions of experts should signal visually to the Chairperson that they wish to take the floor. In responding to questions or comments, NGOs should try to answer without entering too much into the details and provide short concise comments whenever possible. If more information is required, a follow-up question will be asked. At the end of the meeting, NGOs should thank the Committee for inviting them to participate in the meeting.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Main Points to Remember when Preparing an Oral Presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover letter accompanying written information should include request to attend working group</li> <li>• Only NGOs who submit written information may be invited</li> <li>• Statements should be no longer than fifteen minutes</li> <li>• Give opinion on report, highlight key problems, and provide updated information</li> <li>• Provide information on government-NGO consultation on government report</li> </ul>
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#### **IV. Procedures for Follow-up Action**

##### **•• Between the Pre-Sessional Working Group and the Plenary**

Following the pre-sessional working group, the Committee formally invites the government to participate in the plenary session which normally takes place four to eight months later. It sends the list of issues to the government and requests a written response approximately one month before the plenary session. Copies of the list of issues are made

available to NGOs one month in advance of the plenary session. NGOs may be able to obtain the list of issues sooner, by requesting a copy directly from the government. NGOs may contribute to the preparation of the written replies if such assistance is requested by the government or, if they so wish, may prepare their own brief replies to the list of issues and submit these to the Committee prior to the examination of the report. The responses to the list of issues do not become available to NGOs until the plenary session.

During this period, the government also selects the members of the official delegation. The composition of the delegation makes a critical difference to the success of the dialogue with the Committee. The delegation should be varied and include both high-level officials who have authority to speak on behalf of the government, as well as those whose work is more directly related to the implementation of the Convention. As a general rule, the Committee insists that the government send an appropriate delegation from the home country and does not encourage the delegation to consist solely of members of the diplomatic corps based in Geneva. NGOs should confirm the meeting dates with the relevant Ministries and emphasize the importance of sending a high-level knowledgeable delegation.

NGOs may also wish to meet with members of the delegation and any other key persons in order to discuss ways in which the NGO community could work in cooperation with the government in order to address critical problems affecting children. A discussion of this kind, if possible, could help to clarify the role that NGOs can play in addressing children's welfare and rights issues; as well as reinforce important issues which may not have received sufficient recognition in the government report.

NGOs may also want to organize a public event, such as a press conference, in order to bring the wider public's attention to the upcoming meeting and its possible implications, as well as the NGO recommendations to the Committee. Ensuring that the media has access to the State party report and, if appropriate, the NGO report as well as encouraging ongoing media coverage of the meeting with the Committee would serve as a good opportunity for public education and debate on children's issues.

## .. **Plenary Session**

The Committee meets for its formal (plenary) sessions three times a year during a three week period, in January, May-June and September-October. Scrutiny of an initial State report usually extends over a day and a half (three meetings of three hours each) and of a periodic State report over a day (two meetings of three hours each). When the government comes before the Committee, experts may pose additional questions and comments based on information received from NGOs.

NGOs should consider attending the plenary session. The session is public virtually throughout and although NGOs do not have a right to speak during the meeting, they may participate as observers. Participation at the plenary session allows NGOs to obtain a comprehensive picture of the dialogue with the government. Although summary records of the discussion are produced, these contain a summary of the proceedings rather than a

verbatim record of the discussion. In addition, the summary records are often not available in all languages until months after the discussion. It may also be possible to meet with Committee members informally before and during the meeting with the government in order to present additional information, provide updates, or suggest possible questions.

## .. **Concluding Observations**

Following the discussion with the State party, the Committee will adopt concluding observations that point out the positive aspects, the factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention, the principal subjects of concern and concrete suggestions and recommendations for future action. These observations are made public on the last day of a Committee session and will be sent to both the government and the General Assembly of the United Nations. Concluding observations of the Committee can be an unparalleled tool for NGOs to stimulate a discussion at the national level, to exert pressure on the government to follow up on the recommendations of the Committee, and to lobby for changes in legislation and practice.

NGOs should also try to get the national mass media involved in reporting the concluding observations and the comments of Committee members in the press. The effectiveness of the proceedings is largely dependent on the publicity they attract. Scrutiny by the media and the public can help to ensure that the concerns raised by the Committee figure prominently on the national agenda.

## .. **Periodic Reports**

Every five years, States parties are required to submit periodic reports. These reports should provide information on the progress made since the initial report was submitted. The preparation of the periodic report should once again be an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review of measures taken to harmonize law and policy with the Convention and to monitor progress made in the enjoyment of children's rights. The preparation of the report should be a broad participatory exercise involving public participation.

The periodic report should provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Convention and should clearly indicate both progress and difficulties faced. The report should provide more detailed information, reliable data, and statistical information not previously submitted in the initial report. The main objectives for the preparation, submission and consideration of periodic reports are: to assess the positive and negative trends and changes regarding the status of children; to assess the consideration given by the State party to the concluding observations adopted by the Committee and the follow-up to the suggestions and recommendations made by the Committee to the State party; and to define future action and measures required in order to improve the situation of children.

NGOs who wish to make written submissions in response to a periodic report should use the concluding observations as the basis for their report in order to provide the Committee with information as to what has and has not been done to follow-up on the concerns highlighted by the Committee. In addition, the report should provide the Committee with information on what progress has been made in the areas highlighted by the concluding observations and whether or not the progress has been sufficient. The NGO periodic report should also provide the Committee with information on the positive and negative changes in key areas since the consideration of the initial report.

## .. **Local Monitoring**

The need for continuous local monitoring by NGOs is essential. NGOs should not hesitate to submit information to the Committee between State party reports. The Committee is particularly interested in knowing if the State party is following up on its observations and recommendations. It has highlighted the importance of periodically reviewing the implementation of its suggestions and recommendations. In particular, NGOs should contact the Committee if the situation in their country worsens rather than improves after the dialogue with the Committee. Under Article 44(4), the Committee has the option of requesting additional information from a State party between reports.

In the case of a serious situation in the country where there is a risk that the situation may continue or deteriorate, the Committee has indicated that it may take urgent action to seek to prevent serious violations of the Convention. The Committee can only respond however to a pattern of systematic and grave violations within a State party to the Convention and not to individual cases. The Committee may request additional information on the situation from the State party or may suggest a visit to the country. It may also choose to pass the communication on to a different United Nations body. The government is given time to respond before the Committee's action is made public. The Committee has rarely used this procedure and other mechanisms within the United Nations system may be better suited for these types of actions.

## .. **Theme Day**

Once a year, usually in October, the Committee holds a day of general discussion on a thematic issue. Theme days are intended to focus the attention of the international community on one specific aspect of the Convention and to share strategies on programs and policies required to improve the situation. Examples of past themes include "Children in armed conflicts", "Economic exploitation of children", "Role of the family in the promotion of the rights of the child", "The girl child", "The administration of juvenile justice", "The child and the media", "The rights of children with disabilities", and "Children living in a world with HIV/AIDS". NGOs may contribute to these discussions. Written information can be submitted via the NGO Group who plays a role in coordinating NGO input. The discussions are held in public and NGOs also have the possibility of presenting information orally.

The aim of the theme day is not to reiterate problems that occur in the area under discussion. NGOs should remember that their audience is Committee members who are already experts in this area and who are aware of the number of abuses that occur. Rather, NGO should submit case studies and examples of abuses in advance in writing and focus their oral presentation on recommendations for improving the situation. Innovative programs that have proved to be successful should be cited as examples that may be used in other countries. The Committee can propose these courses of action in their discussions with governments and may include them in their final recommendations.

NGOs should put forward a series of recommendations that the Committee could adopt in order to better focus the attention of the international community on the area under discussion. NGOs have an important role to play in providing the Committee with ideas as to what could be done at the international level in order to draw attention to the subject under discussion.

The NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (NGO Group) is a coalition of more than forty international non-governmental organizations, which work together to facilitate the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The NGO Group meets regularly in Geneva to coordinate its action and develop joint strategies

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For further information on the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child contact its Secretariat:

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