Ms. Marta Santos Pais  
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Geneva, 4 June 2009  

Dear Ms. Santos Pais,  

As active members of the Working Group on Children and Violence, a working-group of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we extend to you our sincere congratulations on your appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.  

The news of your appointment has been enthusiastically received within our various organizations. During the long campaign to create the post, starting with the UN Study and advocacy around the General Assembly Resolution through to the final steps of your appointment, the Working Group and its member organizations have stressed that the Special Representative should have other qualities in addition to being a well recognized global expert on the rights of the child. The incumbent should also be an effective independent interlocutor with high levels in governments and with all parties concerned, including NGOs and children themselves. We believe our efforts and aspirations for such an appointment have been fully rewarded.  

As you know, the Working Group on Children and Violence has been committed to promoting progress on this issue since the early days of the Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children and it lobbied hard for the appointment of the Independent Expert to carry out the UN Study. We had the privilege of working closely with Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro and the Study secretariat. This included frequent exchanges of information and views, sometimes in very informal, off-the-record sessions; at other times through more formal submissions on the structure, content and recommendations of the Study. In our view, these consultations proved fruitful and demonstrated that by working together we could achieve considerably more than by working separately. Following the release of the Study and the adoption of General Assembly Resolution in 2006 and GA Resolution A/62/141 in 2007, the Working Group's main preoccupation has been to ensure that the appointment of the Special Representative would take place. Numerous initiatives and contacts have been made over the past 18 months to governments, to the relevant UN agencies and human rights bodies and to the Secretary-General's office itself. Therefore, it was with great pleasure that we learned of your appointment.
In the same spirit that characterized our relations with the Independent Expert, we would welcome the opportunity to work closely with you, committing our efforts to providing whatever support and input we can. We fully understand the challenges ahead and the energy and considerable work that will be required to undertake the multi-varied tasks set out in your terms of reference. The time elapsed since the release of the Study has also compounded your tasks, with pressing economic and financial matters overshadowing global attention to violence against children. Yet the World Report remains as relevant as ever and violence against children persists worldwide. With the Convention on the Rights of the Child celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, and with your appointment, we believe there may be unique opportunities to refocus attention on violence against children.

For our part, as a first step, we would like to invite you to attend a meeting with the Working Group to exchange ideas on priorities, strategies and working methods. Our starting point is naturally grounded in the World Report on Violence Against Children. We are concerned with all forms of violence, in all countries and in all settings. In this regard, the work of the members of the Working Group largely reflects this concern. Within that broad scope, it would be helpful for us to exchange ideas with you on how best to approach the different recommendations in the aforementioned UN Study. Further, as we are based in Geneva, we would like to explore with you how we might provide support to your inter-actions with the Treaty Bodies and the CRC in particular, the Human Rights Council and its Special Procedures as well as relevant Geneva-based UN agencies.

We sincerely hope that your schedule will allow you to come to Geneva and that you will be able to accord us some time. We have asked the convener of our Working Group, Roberta Cecchetti, to liaise with you on this matter.

Please accept once more our warm congratulations on your appointment. Our motivation and commitment have been renewed, and we look forward to meeting with you in Geneva at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Roberta Cecchetti
Convener
Working-Group on Children and Violence

On behalf of:
African Child Policy Forum
Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)
Defence for Children International (DCI)
International Child Catholic Bureau (BICE)
International Save the Children Alliance
Plan International
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
World Vision International