

## Launch Policy on Children International Criminal Court

Mr. Marc Dullaert

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Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Every 5 minutes, a child is killed by violence.

Children are among the principal victims of war. We are failing to take care of them. Conflict, violence and exploitation affect millions of children around the globe – every single day.

The Rome Statute acknowledges the need to advance the rights of children. I praise the Office of the Prosecutor, especially Mrs. Fatou Bensouda, for your commitment to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of crimes against children.

The Policy on Children launched today, demonstrates your determination to take the best interests of the child as primary consideration in your work.

And I want to particularly applaud the Office's efforts to involve children themselves in developing this policy. Far too often, decisions are made about children, not with or by them.

That is why I founded *The KidsRights Foundation* over a decade ago, envisioning an organization that would involve children, and work with them to realize their rights. Children are *changemakers*. Their potential is boundless. This, I have learned from the International Children's Peace Prize winners, such as Abraham M. Keita. He won the Prize in 2015 for demanding justice for children who are victims of violence in Liberia, his homeland.

As KidsRights, we are very proud to have partnered with the Court in the development of this policy. Supporting child and youth participation, we facilitated consultations with *The KidsRights Youngsters*, a unique platform of the International Children's Peace Prize winners.

With the launch of the Policy on Children today, we ignite a powerful momentum to galvanize political will and mobilize wide social support for children's freedom from violence.

So ladies and gentleman, let us close the impunity gap.

I call upon the International Criminal Court to intensify pro-active investigation and legal action against persons who commit crimes against children.

Also, I suggest the Court to develop a child-friendly version of the policy. Informing and engaging children is essential to secure its successful implementation.



Finally, I must underscore it is of key importance that the International Criminal Court investigates those situations where its work is needed the most. The raging war in Syria is currently one of the world's most violent hotbeds. Here, every day, children are victimized.

Therefore, I urge the United Nations Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court without further delays. Immediate prosecution of war crimes against children in Syria is necessary. Children's lives and futures are at stake.

I am very honored to close my remarks referring once more to Keita. Listen to his message. And please transform your policy into reality for him and all other children in the world.

**Change *is* possible. We owe it to our children and we owe it to ourselves.**