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(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P9_TA(2019)0066

Children rights in occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2019 on children's rights on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (2019/2876(RSP))

(2021/C 232/01)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 20 November 1989,
- having regard to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR),
- having regard to Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (CFR),
- having regard to Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2016/800 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights, in particular principle 11 thereof on childcare and support to children,
- having regard to the its resolution of 3 May 2018 on the protection of migrant children ⁽³⁾ and the Commission communication of 12 April 2017 on the protection of children in migration (COM(2017)0211),
- having regard to its resolution of 14 February 2019 on the rights of intersex people ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to General Comment No 10 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child of 25 April 2007 on children's rights in juvenile justice,
- having regard to General Comment No 13 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child of 18 April 2011 on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 335, 17.12.2011, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 132, 21.5.2016, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0201.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2019)0128.

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- having regard to General Comment No 14 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child of 29 May 2013 on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration,
 - having regard to Article 37 of the CRC of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child' General Comment No 6 of 1 September 2005, and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's, *Report of the 2012 Day of General Discussion on the Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration* of 28 September 2012,
 - having regard to the UNICEF report entitled 'The State of the World's Children 2019',
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Article 1 of the CRC provides that 'for the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier';
- B. whereas 100 million children live in Europe and account for over 20 % of the EU population and children under 18 make up more than 40 % of the population in developing countries;
- C. whereas promoting children's rights is an explicit objective of EU policies and is enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which requires that the best interests of the child be a primary consideration in all EU action;
- D. whereas the CRC is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty, which has been ratified by all EU Member States and establishes clear legal obligations to promote, protect and uphold the rights of every child in their jurisdiction; whereas the European Parliament will host a high-level conference on 20 November to mark the 30th anniversary of the CRC; whereas the President of the European Parliament has promised that World Children's Day will be celebrated every year on 20 November with an event held at the European Parliament that will involve children;
- E. whereas children's rights continue to be violated in many parts of the world, including in EU Member States, as a result of violence, abuse, exploitation, poverty, social exclusion and discrimination based on religion, disability, gender, sexual identity, age, ethnicity, migration or residence status;
- F. whereas Article 12 of the CRC and Article 24 of the CFR respect the right of the child to be heard and to have their views on matters which concern them taken into consideration according to their age and maturity;
- G. whereas Article 5 of the CRC provides that 'States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognised in the present Convention';
- H. whereas global issues such as climate change, new technologies and digitalisation pose new threats for children, while also providing new opportunities to learn and connect;
- I. whereas the EU has committed to implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both in its internal and external policies, including SDG 16.2 to 'end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children';
- J. whereas almost 25 million children under 18 are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU; whereas poverty deprives children of educational opportunities, childcare, access to health care, adequate food and housing, family support and even protection from violence and can have very long-lasting effects; whereas the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has highlighted that fighting child poverty is also a matter of fundamental rights and legal obligations ^(?);

(?) FRA report entitled 'Combating child poverty: an issue of fundamental rights', <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/child-poverty>

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- K. whereas the revised European Consensus on Development has described children and young people as agents of development and change, as well as essential contributors to the 2030 Agenda, including through their ability to innovate; whereas the Consensus also asserts that the EU and its Member States will strengthen the rights of young people and empower them to conduct public affairs by promoting their participation in local economies, societies and decision-making;
- L. whereas investment in the future of children, the importance of protecting children through a comprehensive strategy on children's rights and the establishment of the 'Child Guarantee' as a tool to fight poverty and to ensure that children have access to basic services are highlighted as top priorities in the mission letters of Vice-President of the Commission for democracy and demography, Dubravka Šuica, as well as Commissioner-designate for jobs, Nicolas Schmit;
- M. whereas children are a vulnerable group that is heavily affected by the negative impacts of climate change and number among the first victims of its adverse effects, such as drought, floods and storms, food crises and pollution; whereas more than one in every four deaths of children under five worldwide is directly or indirectly related to environmental risks ⁽⁶⁾;
- N. whereas children account for nearly one in four victims of trafficking in human beings registered in the EU, including within their own Member State; whereas girls are primarily targeted, and trafficked for sexual exploitation ⁽⁷⁾;
- O. whereas child sexual abuse and exploitation online is a serious violation of the fundamental rights of children, resulting in enormous trauma and long-lasting harmful consequences for the child victims that can continue well into adulthood, and is an evolving phenomenon; whereas new forms of crime, such as 'revenge pornography' and sextortion are on the rise on the internet, and need to be addressed with concrete measures by the Member States; whereas, according to the latest figures, the number of images depicting Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) online has increased dramatically and at an unprecedented pace, and have become widespread because of the internet, with reports of more than 45 million images and videos flagged as child sexual abuse ⁽⁸⁾;
- P. whereas a child's right to an education must always be guaranteed;

General comments

1. Considers that children's rights should be at the heart of EU policies and that the 30th anniversary of the CRC provides a unique opportunity to ensure full implementation thereof in policy and in practice, and to take additional measures to ensure respect for the rights of every child everywhere, in particular the most vulnerable, leaving no-one behind;
2. Calls on the Commission President-elect to take concrete measures to give greater visibility to the EU's actions in respect of children's rights, for instance by appointing a high-level public figure as the EU representative on children's rights; suggests that this representative would have explicit and exclusive responsibility for children, would serve as a point of reference for all EU matters and policy areas related to children and would ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to the protection of children's rights in all internal and external EU policies and actions; calls for the creation of an EU child protection centre that would ensure this effective and coordinated approach and give an effective and coordinated response to child sexual abuse and all forms of violence against children;
3. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the principle of the best interests of the child is always fully respected in all legislation, in all decisions taken by government representatives at all levels, and in all court decisions, and encourages the Member States to share best practices with a view to improving the correct application of the principle of the best interests of the child throughout the EU;

⁽⁶⁾ WHO report entitled 'Air pollution and child health, prescribing clear air', 2018, https://www.who.int/ceh/publications/Advance-copy-Oct24_18150_Air-Pollution-and-Child-Health-merged-compressed.pdf?ua=1

⁽⁷⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20181204_data-collection-study.pdf

⁽⁸⁾ <https://web.archive.org/web/20190928174029/https://storage.googleapis.com/pub-tools-public-publication-data/pdf/b6555a1018a750f39028005bfd9f35eace4b947.pdf>

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4. Welcomes the commitment of the new Commission to present a new comprehensive strategy on child rights; recalls the EU's commitment to protect the rights of the child, as enshrined in Article 3(3) of the TEU, Article 24 of the CFR and in the revised European Consensus on Development; calls on the Commission to present a strategy to support and protect children everywhere, with no exception, including a specific budget and a child marker in the allocation of the Commission's budgets that would enable EU investment in children to be measured and monitored and would ensure accountability;
5. Calls on the Commission to explore how the EU as a body can accede to the CRC;
6. Recalls that all SDGs are relevant for upholding the rights of the child; calls on the Commission to propose an ambitious and comprehensive framework for children's rights for the EU and its Member States that would allow them to meet the 17 SDGs, in particular by delivering on the SDG that relates most closely to children and by using SDG indicators that are directly linked to children's rights;
7. Recalls that climate change and environmental risks caused by human activity, including air pollution, endocrine disruptors and pesticides, have a damaging effect on children; calls on the EU and the Member States to step up action to ensure a healthy environment for children and combat the negative effect of climate change, notably by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the Paris Agreement;
8. Notes that gender inequalities have a huge impact on children's quality of life; whereas, despite remarkable progress made, gender is still one of the main grounds for inequality, exclusion and violence around the world and has a profound impact on children;
9. Highlights that children are vulnerable consumers and therefore calls on the Member States to protect children from aggressive, misleading and intrusive advertising and profiling of children for commercial purposes, to ensure that audio-visual commercial communications provided by media service providers and video-sharing platform providers under their jurisdiction do not encourage behaviour prejudicial to children's health or safety, in particular as regards food and beverages that are high in salt, sugar or fat or that otherwise do not meet national or international nutritional guidelines;
10. Welcomes the fact that the eradication of child labour is one of the new Commission's priorities; calls on the new Commission to apply a zero-tolerance approach to child labour; calls for measures to oblige industries to eradicate child labour; calls for the EU and its Member States to ensure that goods that circulate in their territory have not been produced using forced or child labour;

Internal policies

End all forms of violence against children

11. Condemns all forms of violence against children, including physical, sexual and verbal abuse, online and offline violence, forced marriage, child labour, prostitution, trafficking, trafficking of organs, torture, other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, honour killings, female genital mutilation, recruitment, conscription and the use of children as soldiers and human shields, deprivation, neglect and malnutrition as well as psychological violence and all forms of bullying; considers that tradition, culture, religion or beliefs, political or any other opinion should never be used to justify violence against children; recalls the important role that communities and civil society organisations can play in eliminating all forms of violence against children;
12. Calls on the Member States to draw up legislation that prohibits and penalises corporal punishment against children or, where it already exists, to ensure the effective implementation thereof;
13. Urges the Commission and the Member States to work out a national strategy and put in place a holistic multi-stakeholder approach to eradicate sexual violence and child abuse both online and offline; stresses that it is crucial to cooperate with industry and calls on ICT companies and online platforms to take their share of responsibility in the fight against child sexual abuse and exploitation online; stresses the importance of Member States launching national awareness-raising campaigns that inform children in a child-friendly manner about the risks and threats associated with the internet, in addition to campaigns targeted at parents;

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14. Welcomes the Council conclusions of 8 October 2019 on combatting the sexual abuse of children and calls on the current and upcoming Council presidencies to step up efforts to ensure that Member States take concrete actions to better assist victims and work out effective preventive, investigative and prosecution measures to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice;

15. Calls on the Member States to fully implement Directive 2011/93/EU and Parliament's resolution on the Implementation of Directive 2011/93/EU on combatting the sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography⁽⁹⁾; calls on the Member States that are State Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) to implement the recommendations of the Lanzarote Committee (Committee of the Parties of the Lanzarote Convention);

16. Acknowledges that law enforcement authorities are confronted with an unprecedented spike in reports of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) online and face enormous challenges when it comes to managing their workload as they focus their efforts on imagery depicting the youngest, most vulnerable victims; stresses the need for more investment, in particular from industry and the private sector, in research and development and new technologies designed to detect CSAM online and expedite takedown and removal procedures;

17. Calls on the Member States to enhance cooperation between law enforcement authorities and civil society organisations, including hotline networks, which combat child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation; calls on the Commission to support organisations that combat child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation, such as the WePROTECT Global Alliance;

18. Urges the Commission and the Member States to take concrete measures to end child sexual abuse by investing in preventive measures, identifying specific programmes for potential offenders and more effective support for victims;

19. Calls on the Commission to update the 'Better Internet for Children' strategy set out in 2012⁽¹⁰⁾;

Investing in children

20. Calls for the EU and its Member States to invest in public services for children, including childcare, education and health, and particularly in extending the public network of kindergartens, nurseries and public utility services offering leisure activities for children;

21. Calls on the Member States to adopt laws to safeguard and strengthen maternity and paternity rights in order to provide a healthy, stable environment for children, in particular during the first months of their lives; urges the EU and its Member States to ensure the full implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive, since achieving a better, fairer work-life balance will have a positive impact on children's welfare; recalls that children have the right to be with their parents and that they need enough time together and enough income to live in safety and happiness;

22. Calls on the EU and its Member States to step up efforts to end child poverty by adopting a further Council recommendation on investing in children, in order to update and upgrade its policy framework to guide Member States in their efforts to ensure that children grow up in inclusive and prosperous societies where no one is left behind, and by setting targets in the EU's 2030 Agenda to reduce child poverty by half; reiterates the need to improve the collection of disaggregated data in order to help monitor and assess progress towards ending child poverty and social exclusion;

23. Calls on the Member States to support the establishment of a European Child Guarantee with appropriate resources, with the aim of encouraging national policy reforms in order to contribute to equal access for children to free health care, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition for the eradication of child poverty and social exclusion; recalls the importance of introducing children's rights and wellbeing as parameters of the country-specific recommendations in the framework of the European Semester and in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights;

⁽⁹⁾ OJ C 369, 11.10.2018, p. 96.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2012%3A0196%3AFIN>

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24. Calls on the EU and the Member States to invest in children and adolescents and provide them with the skills and knowledge required for the labour market, so that they can enjoy their right to thrive and fulfil their full potential as agents of change in society;

25. Encourages the Member States to invest in preventive measures to tackle the rising phenomenon of child mental health disorders ⁽¹¹⁾ in their national systems, and ensure that schools are sufficiently funded to provide counselling and that teachers are adequately trained;

26. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to explicitly consider children as a priority when programming and implementing regional and cohesion policies such as the European disability strategy, the EU framework for national and Roma integration strategies and the EU's equality and non-discrimination policy;

Education

27. Calls on the Member States to guarantee the right to education to every child;

28. Highlights the importance of the holistic approach to education, which seeks to empower children to use their academic learning as a foothold for their emotional and social development and which seeks also to encompass psychological, social and emotional growth; highlights the importance of creativity, art and culture in education;

29. Encourages the Member States to establish measures to combat and prevent early school leaving and to ensure gender-equitable access to quality education from early childhood to adolescence, including for children with disabilities, marginalised children and those living in areas affected by humanitarian or other emergencies;

30. Highlights that inclusiveness and innovation should be the leading principles for education and training in the digital age; takes the view that digital technologies should not reinforce existing inequalities, but should instead be used to close the digital divide between students from different socio-economic backgrounds and regions of the EU; stresses that an inclusion-driven approach must take advantage of the full potential of the resources provided by new digital technologies, including personalised education and partnerships between educational institutions, and that, in so doing, it can enable access to quality education and training for people from disadvantaged groups and those with fewer opportunities, including by supporting the integration of migrants and refugees, as well as minorities;

31. Calls on the Member States to guarantee the right to inclusive education and to ensure access to comprehensive, age-appropriate information about sex and sexuality, and access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and relationship education for young people in schools, particularly in the light of measures taken by certain countries which forbid schools from dealing with sexual orientation and gender identity;

Child-friendly justice/access to justice for children

32. Urges the Member States to swiftly and effectively transpose, and to fully implement, Directive (EU) 2016/800 on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings ⁽¹²⁾;

33. Calls on the Member States to implement the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice ⁽¹³⁾; stresses that the best interests of the child should always be a primary consideration in decisions concerning children in contact with the justice system, and that the right of the child to be heard should always be granted according to Article 12 of the CRC; recalls that specific safeguards should be put in place for children who come into contact with the justice system, including in family matters such as divorce or adoption, as well as administrative issues;

⁽¹¹⁾ The WHO estimates that 62 000 adolescents died in 2016 from self-harm, which is now the third leading cause of death for adolescents aged 18-19.

⁽¹²⁾ OJ L 132, 21.5.2016, p. 1.

⁽¹³⁾ <https://rm.coe.int/16804b2cf3>

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Children in migration

34. Recalls that the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in all decisions concerning children and migration;

35. Urges the Member States to implement fully the Common European Asylum System package in order to improve conditions for all children in migration, and particularly unaccompanied children in the EU; urges the Commission and the Member States, in this regard, to address the current worrying situation of children in the EU's migrant hotspots; calls on the EU and the Member States to step up action to end the detention of children in the context of migration across the EU, in line with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants ⁽¹⁴⁾, and to work out community-based alternatives to detention, as well as prioritising integration, education and psychological support;

36. Stresses that an unaccompanied child is above all a child who is potentially in danger and that child protection, rather than migration policies, must be the leading principle for Member States and the European Union when dealing with them, thus respecting the core principle of the child's best interests; calls on the Member States to implement Parliament's resolution of 12 September 2013 on the situation of unaccompanied minors in the EU ⁽¹⁵⁾ and asks the Commission to renew its Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014);

37. Calls on all the Member States to facilitate family reunification in a positive, humane and expeditious manner, in line with Article 10 of the CRC;

38. Expresses its concern that children continue to be born stateless, including within the EU, and continue to be excluded from accessing basic rights, including healthcare, education and social protection; reiterates its call on the Member States for a solution to the issue of stateless children within and outside the EU, in accordance with international law; calls on the Commission to promote universal access to birth registration and the child's right to acquire a nationality, with a view to ending the risk of statelessness;

Vulnerable children

39. Calls on the Member States to treat every child first and foremost as a child, regardless of their social or ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, ability or migration status;

40. Stresses the importance for the Member States of working out an intersectional approach to combating all forms of discrimination affecting children, taking into in consideration their vulnerabilities, in particular those of children with disabilities, migrant children, children of migrant background, children from minorities and religious groups, LGBTI children, children of foreign fighters, children in detention, children of imprisoned parents, children of LGBTI parents, children in care and stateless or undocumented children, who are disproportionately exposed to discrimination on multiple grounds and therefore require a specialised approach to address their specific needs; calls for the Member States to finally adopt the Horizontal Directive on discrimination;

41. Deplores all forms of gender-based violence and urges the Member States to enforce concrete measures to end child marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful practises that constitute serious human rights violations against children; calls on the Member States, therefore, to ratify the Istanbul Convention and to follow up on Parliament's resolutions of 4 October 2017 on ending child marriage, of 4 July 2018 entitled 'towards an EU external strategy against early and forced marriages — next steps', and of 7 February 2018 on zero tolerance for female genital mutilation (FGM) ⁽¹⁶⁾;

42. Stresses that special attention should be given to children with disabilities; strongly condemns all forms of violence against them, including violence caused by ill-treatment or inappropriate care; urges the Member States to ensure that children with disabilities have access to quality education and training to enable them to achieve the highest degree of independence and social integration, as well as access to care; calls on all the Member States, therefore, to implement the standards set out in the CRC, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children;

⁽¹⁴⁾ https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1

⁽¹⁵⁾ OJ C 93, 9.3.2016, p. 165.

⁽¹⁶⁾ OJ C 463, 21.12.2018, p. 26.

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43. Calls on the Member States to ensure that unnecessary family separation is prevented, and that family- and community-based services are strengthened to allow all children to grow up not in institutions but in families and communities; calls on the Commission to use EU funds to support the transition from institutional to community-based services, both inside and outside the EU;

44. Calls on the Member States to ensure that children in prison are treated in a manner that takes into account their best interests; recalls that children in detention should receive care, protection and any individual assistance — social, educational, vocational, psychological, medical and physical — that they may require in view of their age, gender and personality; urges the Member States to ensure that children in detention maintain regular and meaningful contact with their parents, family and friends through visits and correspondence;

45. Is concerned about the high number of missing children in Europe; encourages the Member States to increase cross-border cooperation, information-sharing and coordination among law enforcement and child-protection authorities in order to identify, locate and protect missing children while ensuring that the best interests of the child are always a primary consideration; calls on the Member States to implement without delay the obligation to provide adequate funding to guarantee the continuity and quality of the operation of hotlines for missing children across the EU, as required by the European Electronic Communications Code adopted in 2018;

46. Recalls the crucial importance of ensuring that the rights of all girls and boys who are victims of trafficking are respected, irrespective of their nationality status; reiterates its call on the Member States to fully implement the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive with a special focus on preventive measures; stresses the importance for the Member States of stepping up action to ensure accountability towards the victims of trafficking and to eradicate the crime itself, as well as to combat the impunity that still prevails among traffickers, exploiters, profit makers and abusers, including by criminalising the use of services exacted from victims of trafficking for all forms of exploitation;

Child participation

47. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop and implement the Bucharest Declaration on child participation⁽¹⁷⁾; highlights that the culture of child participation can be built at all levels — family, community, local, regional, national and European — and can bring short- and long-term benefits for society;

48. Calls on the Member States to strengthen the participation of children in their legislation and encourages the Member States and the Commission to create meaningful mechanisms for child participation, such as children's councils, in the work of European, national, regional and local parliamentary assemblies, in particular in key policy areas;

49. Calls on the Commission to include children in the consultation process in view of the Conference for the Future of Europe;

50. Reminds the EU institutions and the Member States of the significance of the mobilisation actions against climate change led by children and young people, which are key in influencing the European political agenda and are a great example of how children are becoming more and more involved in public policies and increasingly able to express their will to have a say as concerned citizens driving change;

External policies

51. Calls on countries that have not yet ratified the CRC and its additional protocols to do so as a matter of urgency;

52. Calls on the Member States to step up their cooperation and dialogue with third countries, with the aim of raising awareness and advocating for children's rights to be respected everywhere in the world and for no child to be left behind; urges the EU and the Member States to work with partner countries and support the adoption and implementation of legislation, policies, budgets and programmes of action that are inclusive of all children and that include identifying all

⁽¹⁷⁾ <https://chilrendeclaration.typeform.com/to/h8dSPt>

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forms of discrimination and violence — including those based on age, gender and disability which are preventing individual children and groups of children from realising their rights — and taking or promoting the necessary actions to remove these barriers and ensure that the best interests of all children are given primary consideration;

53. Calls on the VP/HR to prioritise children's rights and child protection in all EU external action so as to ensure the effective mainstreaming of children's rights and child protection, including in the context of Human Rights Dialogues, international and trade agreements, the accession process and the European Neighbourhood Policy, and in all the EU's external relations with third countries, in particular countries in conflict; calls on the VP/HR to report annually to Parliament on the results achieved with regard to child-focused EU external action;

54. Calls on the Commission to step up its actions in integrating children's rights and child protection into development cooperation and humanitarian aid in order to ensure adequate funding and to increase the level of protection for children affected by conflict, emergencies or man-made or natural disasters, internally displaced children and child migrants and refugees, and to ensure that their basic rights are respected;

55. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to adopt systemic solutions to tackle intergenerational poverty; highlights that it is vitally important that the new multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 reflect the urgent need to tackle child poverty both within the EU and beyond, through its external actions; underlines the importance of official development assistance (ODA) as a key instrument for eradicating poverty and recalls the respective ODA commitments of the EU and its Member States, including the commitment to the target of spending 0,7 % of Gross National Income (GNI) on ODA;

56. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to finance and guarantee equal access to basic services and education in places affected by emergencies such as conflicts and natural disasters; highlights the fact that access to education can protect children from the physical dangers around them, including abuse, exploitation, conflict-related sexual violence, and recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups, and that education benefits entire communities, boosts economic growth, reduces poverty and inequality and increases individuals' ability to lead a healthy life, participate in society and restore peace and stability;

57. Urges the Commission to follow up on Parliament's resolution of 4 October 2017 on ending child marriage; calls on the EU and its Member States to apply unified legal standards with regard to the procedure for dealing with child marriages, to cooperate with third countries, and to provide training and technical assistance to help with the adoption and enforcement of legislation prohibiting early and forced marriages, including a minimum age for marriage; asks the Member States to adopt measures to encourage the exchange of best practices on minimum age for marriage and the non-recognition of marriage of migrant children arriving in Europe, and to adopt national measures to prevent foreign travel of children for the purpose of marriage outside the EU; calls on the Commission to dedicate a European Year to the fight against child, early and forced marriages;

58. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the implementation of binding human rights and environmental due diligence standards in their trade negotiations and agreements to stop child labour;

Children and armed conflict

59. Calls on the VP/HR to systematically raise grave violations against children with parties to conflict, especially those mentioned in the UN Secretary General's annual report on Children and Armed Conflict; calls on the VP/HR and the Commission to address the short-, medium- and long-term impact of armed conflict on children in an effective and comprehensive manner by making use of the variety of tools at its disposal, including new and strengthened EU guidelines on children and armed conflict;

60. Asks the Commission to provide support to and ensure adequate and long-term funding for rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for conflict-affected children, and to provide them with a sheltered environment in which psychological care and support and education are fundamental, with special emphasis on the particular challenges of girls in their demobilisation and reintegration in society;

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61. Expresses its gravest concern regarding the humanitarian situation of children of foreign fighters held in north-east Syria and urges the Member States to repatriate all European children, taking into account their specific family situations and the best interests of the child as a primary consideration, and to provide the necessary support for their rehabilitation and reintegration; deplores the lack of action hitherto of EU Member States and the absence of coordination at EU level;

62. Is extremely alarmed by the high number of verified killings and maimings of children in armed conflicts; reiterates that children continue to be used as weapons, suicide bombers, sexual slaves and human shields, and are forced to take active roles in hostilities; strongly condemns the use of children in armed conflicts; notes that conflicts have caused hundreds of child casualties, often as a result of attacks deliberately conducted against civilian populations and humanitarian infrastructure; urges the Member States, in this regard, to refrain from selling arms and military equipment to all parties to such conflicts;

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63. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.
