



NOT FAVOURS, BUT RIGHTS

First Proclamation of the
Network of Child and Youth Correspondents



We are the Network of Child and Youth Correspondents (CORIA Network) of the Americas and the Caribbean, composed of children and adolescents from: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

The purpose of the CORIA Network is to communicate and provide information about the promotion and protection of rights, through articles and/or videos. The CORIA Network is underpinned by the enjoyment of rights: participation, expression, freedom of association, the right to give our opinions on issues that affect us and to gain access to information; these constitute opportunities to keep improving the present and projecting the future.

We have organized this first proclamation in order to shed light on and raise awareness of, in the adult world and its institutions, the importance of our voice being heard, respected and taken into account.

We have been celebrating “Americas Children and Youth Day” since 9 June 2017, with the aim of promoting and protecting the rights of children and youth in the region. With this proclamation we seek that this date be respected and valued, in order to celebrate present and future generations. In addition, we propose that all of the countries that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) should find and adopt the best methods to fulfil the rights of children and youth. For the first time, unlike previous treaties, the CRC has recognized children and youth to be holders of rights and has turned adult persons into duty bearers.

Thanks to the CRC, we can all now understand that “as well as being the future, children and youth are the present, we are here and we are transforming the world now” (Citing Sanquive Kadka Tqi Akana).¹

Two issues are addressed in this proclamation, which are very important to us: the violence that constantly affects us throughout the world and child and youth participation.

When we refer to issues, it is essential for us to talk about solutions. This is why there is no forum, workshop or event at which we children and youth do not express our need to participate in government agencies in order to promote change in relation to the problems that affect us. At the same time, we believe that all of the States worldwide neglect the needs of the population and especially those that are directly related to us. The reason for this is our lack of participation in decision-making; the States have become accustomed to legislating about us without consulting us.

Violence in the Americas:

Violence has increased considerably in our region and appears in a variety of forms: verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, based on the Internet, forced labour, armed conflict and

¹ Santiago Cardona Quintero.

others. These forms of violence that have taken shape undermine the lives of many children and adolescents, varying according to the socio-economic context in which they live. We must point out that one of the forms of violence that has taken central stage is linked to technology, with cyberbullying becoming a way of violating our offline and online rights.

These different forms of violence lead to negative consequences that affect children and youth, leaving indelible traces and giving rise to conflict in their personal and social development.

“Violence is violence, wherever it comes from”. It is essential to publicize the situations that we are experiencing or that our peers are experiencing.

Because of this, it is necessary for duty bearers, the State, families and society, to promote action for preventing, eliminating and overcoming this issue.

We, the CORIA Network, as well as other organizations where children and youth are representing their peers, are acting with the aim of promoting childhood and youth that is fully free of violations of our rights.

Child and youth participation:

We wish to express our thoughts on child and youth participation, which is a guiding principle of the CRC and essential in the life of every child and teenager. In any activity involving children or adolescents, steps should be taken to ensure healthy and genuine participation, providing the necessary information that can be consulted in order enable us to make decisions in relation to all matters that affect us.

When we children and youth participate, we seek, in good faith, to provide, consult and question information regarding our rights and the actions of the States and other organizations, at present and projecting towards the future. We track the results of the activities we engage in, in order to ensure that our participation is taken seriously and avoid being made use of in activities that do not really pursue the promotion, guarantee and defence of child rights.

True participation includes every child and teenager, regardless of ethnicity, gender, culture, language disability, level of income, religion, and so on, without discrimination, resulting in cross-generational participation through which to achieve whatever outcomes are sought.

Child and youth participation promotes more inclusive and democratic societies. We believe that it should be understood that being a citizen is not just being 18 years old or older, but acquiring rights and obligations, with a sense of social responsibility.

We are the natural promoters of opportunities for participation in groups involving both families and friends, as well as in organizations of child and youth workers, student centres or other groups in schools, advisory councils or international networks of children and teenagers.

We consider that the links between groups of children and adolescents and national institutions are weak. For this reason, we recommend that all States should promote the expansion and positioning of these opportunities, and ensure that child and youth participation

mainstreams their public policies in order to give rise to an extensive and broad network that all children or adolescents can gain access to if they wish to participate and influence changes taking place in their countries.

We acknowledge those States that protect our rights and recognize our advisory councils and organized groups, and urge the rest of the States to join in the creation of such opportunities, which, for us, constitute effective tools to promote participation.

In short, our work seeks equal rights, obligations and opportunities for human beings, in order to achieve a good life and promote world peace.

For this reason, it is vitally important that our duty bearers – the State, society and families – should help us build protective environments where we children and youth can feel that it is safe to participate, that we are valued by being heard, empowered by being taken into account and united in being able to share knowledge regarding our rights. Adults will never gain a better source of information than the very experiences and perspectives of children themselves..

By means of this proclamation, we propose effective forms of participation that give opportunities for children and youth to express their feelings, experiences and aspirations.

With this proclamation, we are asking the institutions responsible to listen to and consider our opinions, inasmuch as we are not requesting favours, but rights. In addition, we children and youth undertake to fulfil our duty and express our ideas, respecting the ideas of others, and if our opinions are not taken into account, we ask to be given well-founded reasons.

In closing, we believe that celebrating Americas Children and Youth Day creates a precedent with regard to our rights. We wish to give voice to a phrase that has been heard at several events where we children and youth have participated: “NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US”, NOTHING IS OURS WITHOUT US”

Network of Child and Youth Correspondents (CORIA Network) of the Inter-American Children’s Institute (IIN).

9 June 2019





AMERICAS CHILDREN
AND YOUTH DAY

