



Statement by
Trilateral Group
(Austria, Croatia and Slovenia)
at the
44th Session of the Human Rights Council

Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child: Realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment

Geneva, 1 July 2020

Madam President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of Austria, Croatia and Slovenia. In current circumstances, we particularly appreciate this panel.

WHO has provided clear data, linking 1.7 million deaths of children under 5 years to environmental degradation. This means 1.7 million dreams dying and 1.7 million families being shattered every year for reasons that could have been prevented.

The COVID-19 pandemic should be a wake-up call: Science points to a clear link between the destruction of nature, loss of biodiversity, climate change and the increased appearance of zoonotic diseases. COVID-19 is a reminder that human health and environment are closely linked – environmental degradation threatens children's physical and mental health, education, safety, poverty, development and has long-term effects that we have yet to observe.

In this regard, we welcome the preparation of a specific UN policy brief on COVID-19 impact on children.

[We would be interested to hear the panellists' assessment on the possible mid- and long-term effects of COVID-19 on children.]

Our countries believe that the stage is set: year by year we reach a new bottom in observing environmental indicators. Children across the globe have spent their school days calling on us to make a change.

Our countries appreciate the ongoing work of numerous treaty bodies that include the implications of different types of environmental degradation on human rights, and children rights in particular. We have a dedicated report by the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment and there is a number of projects carried out by UNEP, UNICEF, WHO and other UN entities. While we support further work on these issues, enough clear data confirms the indisputable connection between environment and human rights. The time has come to act on it.

[We would be interested to hear on what is the assessment of the role of national and international judiciary and monitoring mechanisms in protecting children rights through a healthy environment.]

Thank you.