

**Comité organisateur /
Organizing Committee**

Riccardo Di Done, Co-Chair
Président O.S.D.E. / President O.P.C.R.

Rashmi Mayur, Ph.D., Co-Chair
President, People's Global Assembly
of the United Nations

**Comité scientifique /
Scientific Committee**

Honorable Herbert Marx, Co-Chair
Justice, Quebec Superior Court

William Rowe, D.S.W., Co-Chair
Director, School of Social Work
McGill University

Peter Allik-Petersenn, B.A., LL.B.
Adrian Bercovici, Fondation Générations
Professor Dorival C. Bruni, Ph.D.
Professeur titulaire Richard Cloutier, Ph.D.
Professor Katherine Covell, Ph.D.
Dominic D'Abate, Ph.D.
Riccardo Di Done
Juge Antonio Discepolo, B.A., B.C.L.
Angela Ficca, B.A., LL.L., LL.M.
Bernard Fortin, B.A., LL., L.Péd.
Richard Goldman, B.A., B.C.L., LL.B.
Donald Horne, Kahnawake Community Services
Professor Brian R. Howe, Ph.D.
Professeur Carl Lacharité, Ph.D.
France Laurendeau
Commander Michel Lecompte
Hugues Létourneau, LL.M.
Justin Lévesque, Ph.D.
Chief Edgar A. MacLeod, B.A., Vice-President,
Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police
Tony Manglaviti, B.A., LL.L.
Rashmi Mayur, Ph.D.
Aldo Morrone, B.A.
Arthur Neumann, Ph.D.
Godwin O. Ohiwerei, Ph.D.
Jean Panet-Raymond, LL.L., M.Sc.
Laurel Rothman, M.S.W.
Joanne Roulston, M.S.W.
Katherine Scott, MES
Philip Shaposnick, B.A., B.C.L.
William Spears, B.A., MBA
Father Joe Sullivan, B.Th.
Father John Walsh, B.Ph., S.S.L., S.T.L.
Cindy Wiggins, B.A.

**Comité d'honneur /
Honour Committee**

John Mould, MSW, RSW, Co-Chair
President, Canadian Association of Social Workers,
North American Vice-President, Int'l Federation
of Social Workers

Liz O'Neill, Co-Chair, Executive Director
Big Sisters and Big Brothers Society

Harata H. Baucke, President, New Zealand
Association of Social Workers
Frank Carbone, Président, Rosmar Litho Inc.
André-H. Dandavino, M.D., Président,
Assoc. des médecins de langue française du Canada
Linda Kislowitz, Executive Director,
Jewish Family Services
The Right Honorable Antonio Lamer
Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
of Canada
Louise Landry, Présidente, Ordre des conseillers
d'orientation et des psychoéducateurs du Québec
Henri Massé, Président, FTQ
Pat Minicucci, Premier vice-président,
Banque Scotia
Eugenia Repetur Moreno, M.S.W.(Equiv)
Executive Director, Cdn. Assoc. of Social Workers
Alison Palin, Director General
Hilton Montreal Airport Hotel
Brian O'Neill, Consultant,
Ligue Nationale de Hockey
Monique Côté Petit
Prés., Dir. Gén., Association
des puéricultrices de la Province de Québec
John Ruggieri, Associé, Di Caprio Ruggieri
Michèle Thibodeau-DeGuire, Présidente et
Directrice Générale, Centraide du Grand Montréal
Peter B. Yeomans
Mayor, City of Dorval



**Organisation pour la Sauvegarde des Droits des Enfants
Organization for the Protection of Children's Rights**

5167, Jean-Talon est, suite 370, Montréal, QC, Canada H1S 1K8
Tel.: (514) 593-4303 Fax: (514) 593-4659
Site Internet / Web site: <http://www.osde.ca>

Courriel / E-mail: info@osde.ca

Les enfants et la pauvreté :

L'impact des choix économiques, sociaux et politiques

Children and Poverty:

The Impact of Economic, Social and Political Choices

23, 24 et 25 mai 2002 / May 23, 24 & 25, 2002

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT ON CHILDREN, POVERTY AND VIOLENCE

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PREAMBLE

More than fifty years after the formation of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and notwithstanding the ratification by 192 countries of the most comprehensive document on the rights of the child, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children of May 2002 concluded that "*Much remains to be done to secure survival, health, education and protection from exploitation for the nearly two billion children of the world*".

Children account for over 35% of the world's population and form the largest age group in many developing countries. Their protection should be made a priority. Yet, children keep on dying and suffering everywhere in the world and continue to be denied the most basic rights and level of protection. Children are also victims of family breakdowns, psychological and physical violence, sexual exploitation, suicide, negligence and social disintegration.

Nearly 650 million children worldwide live in extreme poverty – victims of social abuse, child labour, the sex trade and health disorders. Every year about eleven million children die of preventable causes, often for want of simple and easily provided improvements in nutrition, sanitation and maternal health and education. Globally, more than 104 million children between the ages of six and eleven are not in school, 59 million of them girls.

More money and resources have been spent on war activities during the last 50 years than in the last millennium. Since 1990, almost 80% of the victims of war and conflict have been civilians, mostly women and children. Almost two million children were killed, six million children injured or disabled. Twelve million became homeless in the last decade. The proliferation of small arms, in particular, has caused children to become killers as well as victims of these deadly weapons of destruction.

Thus, poverty and violence are crucial issues for children worldwide. The human, economic, social and health costs of not addressing these issues are already enormous and pose a serious threat to our future.

The Organization for the Protection of Children's Rights (O.P.C.R), a grass-roots organization that is deeply concerned with the issues related to children's rights, organized an **International Summit on Children, Poverty and Violence** in Montreal on October 22 and 23, 2004. Over thirty recognized specialists and leading experts representing seventeen different countries from Africa, Asia, North America, Latin America and Europe as well as twenty-four students from the English Montreal School Board schools and three youths from Cuba attended the Summit.

Following an overview of the current situation of children globally, Summit delegates analysed the data and identified the main issues, barriers and competing interests that are hampering local, national and international initiatives to improve the condition of children. They prepared a five-year child-rights based plan of action in order to alleviate the worsening situation of children.

We invite local, national and international communities at every level to take this declaration and its recommendations as guidelines for action in the years to come. They are part of an inclusive and participatory process aimed at reclaiming civil society and making it work for the benefit of our children and their families. They are based on the conviction that it is only through the accumulated efforts of many and by developing a synergy between all components of society that we will succeed in furthering the cause of children and creating a material, social and emotional environment in which all children have access to the resources and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential.

THE STATE OF AFFAIRS

Whereas children are human rights-holders in their own right,

Whereas protection from violence, access to food, health and free primary education should be perceived as issues for redress *now* because of children's inherent human rights,

Whereas the improvement of the condition of children has failed to meet expectations despite the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international, regional and national child-rights instruments,

Whereas additional efforts are needed and more resources must be allocated towards reducing and preventing poverty and violence against children,

Whereas the well being of children is intrinsically linked to the socio-economic and environmental conditions of their family, community and country,

Whereas special efforts are needed to ensure the rights of children within particularly vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, immigrants, children in minority groups, children with disabilities and socially or economically disadvantaged children and their inclusion in all programming for the prevention and eradication of poverty and violence,

Whereas a large number of critical issues facing society, such as rising income inequalities between and within countries, social division and unrest, increasing number of street children and street gangs, and mounting healthcare and welfare costs, cannot be resolved without first improving the condition of children,

Whereas the responsibility for imparting ethical and moral values conducive to the harmonious development of children and society as a whole falls to adults and their institutions,

Whereas poverty and violence are complex, multidimensional, diverse and interconnected issues, and that a comprehensive and integrated approach both in the long term and short term is needed to address the root causes of children's rights violations and not only the symptoms,

Whereas children who are capable of forming their own views have the inherent right to express those views freely and be heard in all matters affecting them, these views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity,

Whereas the main barriers to improving the condition of children worldwide are lack of political will and misdirected distribution of available resources,

WE DECLARE THAT:

All nations must respect their commitment to undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and, in the case of industrialized nations, to devote 0.7% of GDP to development assistance.

We, the delegates at the International Summit, recommend the following measures as part of a child-rights based plan of action for the next five years:

- To promote greater awareness about and respect for the needs, rights and value of children and youth among all segments of society, including decision makers, law enforcement officials, parents, teachers and children themselves, through national **public information campaigns** and targeted community-level educational initiatives;
- To increase and embrace the **meaningful participation and representation of children and youth** in all existing local, national and international political, economic, legal, social and cultural institutions, agencies, bodies and forums whose policies have an impact on the well-being and development of children, starting with the increased involvement of children in the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and enacting similar measures at all levels of society;
- To support and expand an extensive **international network of NGOs and mainstream and independent media** in order to focus public opinion on child rights issues as well as to monitor, accelerate and consolidate governmental and non-governmental initiatives for children at the local, national and international level;
- To create **supportive community models**, that subscribe to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant human rights instruments and base their actions and decisions first and foremost on the best interests of the child, give children and youth a meaningful voice in all matters affecting them and embody the values conducive to a child-friendly and empowering environment for youth;
- To make use of positive, **child-friendly cultural strengths and practices** to promote children's rights and identify and abolish cultural practices that are detrimental to children's well-being and/or violate children's rights;
- To increase support of **natural nurturing systems** already in place, such as parents, the extended family and other community-level caregivers in recognition of their crucial role as the first line of defence and protection as well as role models for children;
- To foster the development of **community-based children rights' zones** with definite and readily identifiable boundaries that would use the best interests of the child as the primary consideration in all matters and promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a framework for all programs and policies. Knowledge about and commitment to the application of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child would be used as criteria for joining. These zones could be a city, a school or a neighbourhood but all would gradually ensure the effective representation of children and youth through the establishment of ombudsmen, children councils and their inclusion in all policy- and decision-making bodies;
- To build and propagate a **culture of learning** through increased promotion, funding, support and availability of educational and vocational opportunities;

- To establish **international standards of education** that reflect an inclusive, child-friendly, comprehensive and holistic long term approach, which would include the following as part of the school curriculum:
 - Children’s rights as set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Global citizenship and its responsibilities
 - Conflict resolution and peace studies
 - Self-esteem
 - Respect, tolerance and appreciation for all cultures, races and people
 - Nutrition and health choices
 - Preventative programmes dealing with parental responsibilities, discipline, relationships, at risk situations and behaviours, and other related areas of concern
- To encourage the development of a **roadmap for rights**, providing time-bound examples of best practices in making universal principles such as those enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality at the local government and community level.

Therefore:

The present declaration and recommendations stem from the acknowledgment that world strategies and programs have failed to redress the worsening situation of children since 1989 and that the most pressing concern of society as a whole must be to work towards alleviating poverty and violence against children. We urge governments and international organizations to fulfil their commitments and take all necessary measures to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensure that children have access to the material, social, psychological and emotional support they need to achieve their full potential. We urge civil society to reclaim its rightful place and power to hold governments, policy makers and elected officials accountable and call for immediate, concrete measures to uphold the best interests of the child as well as for the direct involvement and meaningful participation of children and youth in all matters that concern them.

The present declaration and recommendations were approved by delegates representing the different regions of the world at the Montreal International Summit on Children, Poverty and Violence on October 22-23, 2004.



Riccardo Di Done
Co-Chair
International Summit on
Children, Poverty and Violence
President, O.P.C.R.



William Rowe, DSW
Member, International Summit
Steering Committee
Co-Chair, O.P.C.R. Scientific
Committee