

Governments of the world have made legally binding promises to the children of their countries. Here are the answers to all those questions about your government's promises... click on the links below to get to them.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

On 20 November 1989 the United Nations General Assembly (including 191 countries around the world) made promises to children by formally adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention provides the framework for the promotion and protection of the basic human rights of all children, everywhere, all the time.

The rights of children and the standards to which all governments must aspire in realising these rights for all children, are fully articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention is the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history – it has been ratified (brought in to legal force) by every country in the world except two, the United States and Somalia – and therefore uniquely places children centre-stage in the quest for the universal application of human rights. By ratifying this instrument, national governments have committed themselves to protecting and ensuring children's rights and they have agreed to hold themselves accountable for this commitment before their children and the international community.

The Convention includes the full range of human rights – civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. Two Optional Protocols, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, were adopted to strengthen the provisions of the Convention in these areas. They entered into force, respectively on 12 February and 18 January 2002.

For further information, please visit the CRC section of the Child Rights Information Network. [☐☐](#)

The Special Session and 'A World Fit for Children'

In May 2002 the countries of the world met in New York to decide what should be done to improve the lives of children. The main result of that meeting – which was called the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children – was a document called A World Fit for Children. This document describes the promises made by governments to improve the lives of

children from 2002 to 2012. It also describes how they will find the resources they will need and the ways in which they will make sure the promises are being fulfilled.

Why was there a Special Session on Children?

In 1990 there was a major international meeting on children called the World Summit for Children. It agreed to 27 goals that the governments of the world would try and achieve for children. The 2002 Special Session on Children was an opportunity to look at what had happened to children since 1990 and to make new promises aimed at improving the lives of children for the next 10 to 15 years. 400 children from around the world also joined the Special Session, addressing and sitting in the UN General Assembly to help the world's leaders understand the challenges and opportunities facing the world's children.

What was agreed at the Special Session on Children?

The agreements of the Special Session are agreed in the 'World Fit for Children Document.'

[Click here to read the Global Movement for Children's child-friendly version of 'A World Fit for Children'.](#)

[Click here to read the full, official document.](#)

What will happen to the world if the goals of the World Fit for Children are not met?

The current situation for children around the world will continue and probably worsen.

Currently:

- Six hundred million children live in poverty, with little or no access to healthcare, education and opportunities for the future□
- 30,000 infant lives are lost every day to preventable causes□
- Over 100 million boys and girls do not attend primary school□
- Almost 3 million children are infected with the HIV virus or living with AIDS. More than 14 million children under the age of 15 have lost one or both parents to AIDS, the vast majority of them in sub-Saharan Africa.□

- An estimated 57% of the 104 million out-of-school children are girls, with the highest numbers in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia.

(from the GMC Report on the 2nd year of follow-up to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children)

To read more about the Special Session on Children, including all the preparatory documents and the results, see the UNGASS section on the Child Rights Information Network.

What are the Millennium Development Goals?

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were agreed in the year 2000 by governments around the world in an effort to ensure that the rights of people living worldwide are better protected in this century than they were in the previous one.

The goals are measurable and time-bound. One aim, for example, is to reduce the number of people living in poverty by half by the year 2015 (measurable by the number of people living below a dollar a day). However, enormous commitment from all governments, along with international institutions, organisations and individuals is vital if we want to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The goals in short are, by 2015, to:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

How do the MDGs relate to the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

The MDGs aim to ensure that every child has the right to grow up in a stimulating and healthy environment, and that every child has an opportunity to be a part of his or her development.

Most of the goals focus on child rights and relate to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These include the right to education, a healthy life free from disease and hunger, an end to girl's discrimination, and to live in a sanitary and sustainable environment.

The current situation:

At the current rate of international progress, it will be 2050 before many countries, especially those in sub Saharan Africa, meet the Millennium Development Goals.

Most of the deadlines set for achieving the goals are 2015, but in 2005 the first of those them will be missed. Governments pledged that as many girls as boys would go to school, but still two thirds of the children missing an education are girls. Unless international action starts now the remaining seven goals will also be unfulfilled promises and the chance of lifting millions of people out of desperate poverty will once again be an empty dream.

At the present rate of international action, the Millennium Development Goals will not be met for many countries, especially those in Africa, by the 2015 deadline. Already 59 countries - predominantly in sub-Saharan Africa or the former Soviet Union - have slid further down the poverty ladder in the past decade as they contend with HIV/AIDS, wars and mammoth foreign debts (according to the UN Human Development Report, 2003).

There is urgent need to address the causes of poverty and achieve the aims that the MDGs promise.

To find out more about how YOU can do something about this and join in with an international campaign to achieve the MDGs in 2005, [click here](#).

To see the goals in more detail, as well as to look at the deadlines and how they will be measured, see the Millennium Campaign website [here](#).