



A Pint-Sized Dilemma? Navigating the Rights of Children in the Case of Climate Change

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Abstract

The prevailing consensus among scholars is that a multitude of international dialogues and conferences have been extensively recorded pertaining to the enduring matter of climate change. Over the years, it has become a matter of policy concern and a menace to global peace, causing irreversible and adverse effects on human rights. Frequently susceptible to this climate change are vulnerable groups of our society, especially those in less developed nations, developing nations, individuals facing poverty, indigenous groups, and children are the most susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

This discourse endeavors to shed light upon the pervasive tendency to overlook the profound impact of climate change upon the younger generation, thereby elucidating the frequency with which such oversight occurs. The individuals in question are presently experiencing the repercussions of this climate change, manifesting in both psychological and physiological afflictions. The present discourse aims to shed light upon the ramifications of prevailing weather patterns and climatic circumstances on the contemporary generation of children.

The primary aim of this study is to delve into the intricate relationship that exists between climate change and the fundamental rights of children. The multifaceted phenomenon of climate change exerts disparate impacts upon the vulnerable demographic of children across diverse geographical locations. The focal point of this discourse revolves around matters pertaining to natural calamities, afflictions, the provision of potable water, and the attainment of sustenance in adequate quantities.

Through a doctrinal analysis of international instruments and recent climate jurisprudence, illustrated by country experiences across diverse settings, this study maps climatic harms onto children's rights and State obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and proposes a dedicated international mechanism for children and climate to close the gap between rights affirmed and protection delivered.

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I. Introduction

“If you really think that the environment is less important than the economy, try holding your breath while you count your money”. – Guy McPherson

In the rush to fulfil one’s own capitalistic endeavour, the world has now turned into a money making pit, wherein the least of the heed is paid to the environment. What do we have in hands today is extreme levels of global warming, which has resulted in climate change (Abbass et al., 2022). The predicament associated with the same is that it’s not the adult population getting severely affected, but it’s even worse for the children, specifically in under-developed and developing nations (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, n.d.). The Northern Hemisphere recorded unprecedented heatwaves in 2023 (Cvorak & Villa Alsina, 2023) which had a severe and direct impact upon children (World Weather Attribution, 2023). Furthermore, a conflagration threatened the vacation camps of 1,200 children in Greece (McKie, 2023) and compelled their evacuation (Plummer & Armstrong, 2023). Following intense precipitation, children were swept away by flooding in Kentucky, while the West Coast was overwhelmed by an unprecedented heatwave (Lee, 2023).

The summer ahead in Australia is expected to be very hot, dry, and burning. However, this is nothing compared to what lies ahead (Readfearn, 2024). This conundrum is called for as it is the result of the failure of us humans. The United Nations issued a declaration in August 2023 that specifically addresses the impact of climate change on child rights, highlighting how climate change undermines even the fundamental right to life. Furthermore, it provides a comprehensive explanation of the measures required to alleviate this disastrous event (Adetunji, 2023a).

Scholars widely agree that several worldwide conversations and conferences have been carefully documented about the ongoing issue of climate change (Peleg, 2023). The danger presented by climate change was anticipated as far back as the 19th century (History.com Editors, n.d.). However, since we now reside in the 21st century, the issue has not reduced but rather escalated with each successive day (End Violence Against Children, 2022). Currently, climate change has evolved into a human rights issue due to its extensive impacts, such as the loss of human lives and disruption of livelihoods (Srivastava, 2023). As a result, it increasingly hinders the achievement and fulfilment of these basic entitlements. Over time, it has become a significant policy problem and a threat to world peace, resulting in irrevocable and negative impacts on human rights (Adetunji, 2023b). Vulnerable segments of our society, particularly those in underdeveloped and emerging countries, persons experiencing poverty, indigenous communities, and children, are more sensitive to the effects of climate change (Save the Children, 2023).

The major objective of this research is to investigate the complex link that exists between the deterioration of the environment and the basic rights of adolescents and young adults. A complete review of legislative frameworks, international conventions, and judicial judgements will be used in order to attain this goal. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of the United Nations is a vital compilation of ideas that precisely outlines the basic rights that children are entitled to. This historic declaration astutely divides the rights of children into three different categories: the rights to survival and growth, the rights to protection, and the rights to non-discrimination and participation. The multidimensional phenomena of climate change have a variety of effects on the vulnerable population of children, and these effects vary depending on the location of the children within the population. The issues that are at the centre of this

discussion are those that are associated with natural disasters, illnesses, the availability of drinkable water, and the acquisition of nourishment in sufficient numbers.

II. Research Methodology

This article adopts a doctrinal and policy-oriented legal methodology, situating the relationship between climate change and children's rights within the broader fields of international human rights law and climate governance. Rather than treating climate change as a purely environmental problem, the study analyses it as a question of rights and the State obligations that correspond to them. The analytical framework is organised around the four general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – the right to life, survival and development (Article 6), the best interests of the child (Article 3), non-discrimination (Article 2) and respect for the views of the child (Article 12) – read together with the substantive rights most exposed to climatic harm, namely the rights to health, education, water, food, an adequate standard of living and protection. Each major climate impact examined below is mapped onto the specific right and the corresponding State duty that it engages, so that the analysis moves deliberately from documenting harm to identifying the legal obligation the harm implicates.

The study draws principally on primary legal and treaty-body materials – the CRC and its Optional Protocols, the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, General Comment No. 26 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee's decision in *Sacchi et al. v. Argentina et al.*, and the recent climate advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea – supplemented by United Nations and UNICEF reports, peer-reviewed scholarship on intergenerational justice and rights-based climate litigation, and contemporaneous reporting used only to evidence discrete factual events. Greater interpretive weight is accorded to treaty-body, judicial and scholarly sources than to organisational web pages or media reports, the latter being relied upon for factual illustration rather than as legal authority.

The national and sub-national examples discussed below – Bolivia, the United States (including the states of Kansas and Montana), Zimbabwe, Norway, Brazil and India – are illustrative rather than strictly comparative. They were selected to span the variables most relevant to the argument: differing income levels and development status; distinct climatic hazards, including drought, flooding, water-borne disease, tornadoes, deforestation and extreme heat; contrasting legal traditions and constitutional protections; and varying postures toward the CRC, ranging from long-standing ratification to the conspicuous non-ratification of the United States. The examples are offered to demonstrate the range of governance and protection approaches now in evidence, and the gaps between them, and not to support generalised conclusions about the comparative merits of national climate policies. Where the climate policies of Norway, Brazil and India are juxtaposed directly, the comparison is confined to those States' mitigation commitments and is presented on that limited, thematic basis.

III. The Inter-Relation Between Climate Change & Children's Rights

The Beginning of the Debate

A significant accomplishment for the global community in terms of policy formulation is the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). To combat climate change, appropriate legislation and policy must be crafted in response to existing research and scientific evidence. Climate change will have devastating effects on children and subsequent generations, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). During the policy-making process, important but

often neglected subjects include the needs of children and future generations in terms of survival and development (UNICEF, 2015).

One important step that could lessen the acute effects of climate change on human lives is the adoption of a human-rights-based approach to climate change policy (Deva Prasad & Suchithra Menon, 2018). Within the quickly changing field of climate change policy, the idea that the effects of climate change may jeopardise the preservation and realization of human rights has gradually gained traction, and such issues have begun to be addressed within the framework of the UNFCCC. This is the setting in which a more thorough comprehension of children's rights and climate change policy becomes necessary.

Since children are seen as the future of humanity, children's rights have gained international attention. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was established in 1989, and the international community's approval of it offer compelling evidence of the growing importance of safeguarding children's rights. Plans and strategies for mitigating and adapting to climate change must take into account the concerns of children and future generations, who are currently not given special consideration.

Humans are positioned at the center of the formulation of climate change policy due to the human-rights-based approach (Rajamani, 2010). This stands as a significant shift from a view of State-centered policy perspective. The academic community and civil society organizations have given the human rights approach considerable attention and acceptability since it is more principle-oriented (Benoit, 2016). The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has repeatedly brought attention to the threat that climate change poses to the entire spectrum of human rights in a number of resolutions. In 2008, Resolution 7/3 brought attention to the potential harm that climate change could do to human rights. The UNHRC passed six further resolutions in addition to this first one (Deva Prasad & Suchithra Menon, 2018). All these resolutions highlight the need for a deeper knowledge of the potential effects of climate change on human rights. They have cleared the path for the inclusion of human rights as a top priority in the field of climate change law and policy.

Due to their extreme vulnerability, children should be protected, according to UNICEF's report on the effects of climate change on children's rights (Carrington, 2021). The main rights that will be impacted include those to health and education as well as other important rights like access to food, water, and housing (Helldén et al., 2021). The possibility of being uprooted could result in child labour and child trafficking, two forms of child exploitation.

The Progress So Far

According to a recent report by UNICEF it was highlighted that almost half of the world's children that is 953 million were exposed to high or extremely high-water stress in 2022 (Zumbish, 2023). Additionally, the study stresses the importance of putting children first in the fight against climate change worldwide. Additionally, it shows that 436 million people resided in regions with high or very high water vulnerability and that 739 million children had high or extremely high water shortages. On top of that, there are 559 million children who are vulnerable to heatwaves right now, and by 2050, experts predict that all 2.02 billion kids might feel its effects (Squires et al., 2024). The report emphasises the health impacts on children from climate-related events like floods, which compromise safe water supply and sanitation, leading to diseases like diarrhoea. Child malnutrition is exacerbated by climate-related crop failures and rising food prices. UNICEF stresses the necessity for global partnerships to address the planetary crisis for children, launching a Sustainability and Climate Action Plan to

protect the most vulnerable children. UNICEF sees the upcoming COP 28 as a critical opportunity to include children on the climate change agenda and calls for their integration into the Global Stocktake process to assess progress towards the goals of the Paris Climate Change Agreement (UNICEF, 2023a).

With the release of General Comment No. 26 (UNICEF, 2023b), the UN has formally acknowledged children's rights to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for the first time, with a special emphasis on climate change. Environmental degradation and climate change have detrimental impacts on children's rights. This advice, which was adopted on 22 August 2023, establishes a legal framework to address these consequences. It emphasises the responsibilities of member nations to lessen environmental consequences in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, while simultaneously guaranteeing children's involvement, access to information, and fairness in environmental matters (Pandey, 2023). This manifesto, to which children from all across the globe participated, emphasises their right to a healthy environment and their duty to advocate for environmental protection.

30th anniversary of the UNCRC was marked in the year 2019 in which it was reported that sixteen child petitioners, including prominent activists like Greta Thunberg and Alexandria Villaseñor, from 12 countries, have filed a historic complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, condemning governments' inaction on the climate crisis (Humanium, 2019). These children, aged between 8 and 17, argue that failure to address the climate crisis violates their rights (Pathak, 2023). They urge the committee to compel Member States to take decisive action to safeguard children from the harmful effects of climate change. The complaint was lodged under the Third Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, allowing individuals or groups to seek UN intervention when a country fails to address rights violations (Bote, 2019). This action highlights the efficacy of international child rights mechanisms, empowering children to advocate for their rights and participate in legal processes (FT Reporters, 2019). It signals a growing awareness among children of their rights and their ability to engage in legal avenues to address their concerns, marking a significant step forward in children's participation in global issues. This event is seen as just the beginning of children asserting their rights and shaping the discourse on climate action (Carlarne, 2022). On 11 October 2021, however, the Committee published its decision in the matter, declaring the five communications inadmissible because the petitioners had not first exhausted domestic remedies; even so, the Committee broke new ground by holding that a State can be held responsible for the effect of emissions originating within its territory on the rights of children both within and beyond its borders, and that the particular situation of children entitles them to heightened protection against reasonably foreseeable climate harm (*Sacchi et al. v. Argentina et al.*, 2021). The decision is therefore double-edged: it left the children without a remedy on procedural grounds, yet it established that the extraterritorial and intergenerational reach of climate harm falls squarely within States' obligations under the Convention. Scholarly assessments of this jurisprudence caution that, although child claimants are unusually well placed to press intergenerational-justice arguments, child-specific rights claims remain under-utilised in youth-led climate litigation (Donger, 2022), and that conflating children with future generations obscures their distinct standing as present-day rights-holders to whom States owe immediate and heightened obligations (Nolan, 2024).

Even though there have been advancements regarding children voicing for their own rights but what matters here is whether children are able to breathe in a healthy and clean environment. According to a report compared to children born in 1960, children born in 2020 are expected to experience 6.8 times more heatwaves, 2.8 times

more river floods, and 2.6 times more drought events in their lifetimes (Agarwal, 2023). However, they are not just long-term effects. These effects are already being felt by children in many regions of the world, particularly in lower-income nations (Barton, 2021).

Every law or policy that is formulated by States must consider how it will affect children in accordance with the CRC principle which focuses on the best interests of the child (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, art. 3). However, as things are right now, child welfare is not taken into consideration in climate change legislation. Because of the effects of the climate, many people have competing needs, making it challenging to concentrate on the needs of groups, like children. States have a positive duty to create an environment that is conducive to the protection of children's rights because of the rights of children to life, survival, and development (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, art. 6). This entails addressing the infrastructural and economic conditions in addition to creating a favourable legal and policy environment - a significant challenge in any case.

Health

The health and survival risks that impoverished children and children in developing nations already confront because of their fragile health systems, particular physiological vulnerabilities, and the nature of childhood are being intensified by climate change. Diarrhoea killed almost 1,600 children under five every day in 2012, accounting for one in ten preventable child deaths. Diarrhoea is contracted by polluted and dirty water and is the second leading cause of mortality among children, behind pneumonia (UNICEF, 2013). In the developing world, the poorest households already face a shortage of clean water: although piped water supplies are used by 55% of the worldwide population, just 12% of residents in least-developed nations and 4% of their rural populations have access to this convenience. Climate change is limiting access to clean drinking water and the infrastructure that provides it through flooding that occurs after a cyclone or heavy rainstorm, salinization from rising sea levels that contaminates water and ruptures pipes, and drought that dries up water sources and concentrates contaminants. The number of instances of diarrhoea each week increased by 5.1% for every 10 millimetres above the average rainfall threshold of 52 millimetres, and by 3.9% for every 10 millimetres below it, according to a study conducted in Bangladesh (Masahiro, 2007). In Peru, the frequency of diarrhoea rose by 8% for every degree Celsius that the temperature rose. One water-related risk to children's survival is diarrhoea. floods brought on by extreme weather is another: in Nepal, the number of children who die from floods is six times higher than the number of people who died in the same villages the previous year, with girls dying from flooding at a rate of 13.3 per 1000, while boys die from it at a rate of 9.4 per 1000 (Pradhan et al., 2007).

In certain countries, the 2008 food crisis resulted in a 20%-50% increase in the price of staple foods, which led to a rise in the incidence of severe malnutrition (wasting) among young children. A shift in the weather pattern contributed to this upsurge. World wheat prices soared to \$8.50/bushel in 2011 from \$4/bushel the previous year due to a conglomeration of severe weather events in China (drought), Canada (record rain), Russia (drought and fires), Ukraine and Kazakhstan (drought), and Australia (torrential rain). This increase occurred after only two years of relatively mild weather (Johnstone & Mazo, 2013).

Children being the future of the nation health is an important factor and it indirectly effects one's performance. So, as a wise man once said for better performance one should be healthy and fit.

Education

Education plays an important role in children's life this is something that can be transferred from one generation to another generation. Access to education is a basic human right. What happens is during these floods or drought is schools are shut down. Some schools are even destroyed by these climatic changes, and it get decades to come to the normal phase. Village areas away from the cities are more prone to these climatic change as those are the areas near mountains, rivers etc (Ruppel-Schlichting, 2013). It takes many years for these areas to develop again so if a school is destroyed then it many take many years' sometimes even decades for its rebuild. That's why many children are bound to quit school and discontinue their studies. After being hit by these calamities' families have lack of money and have to go through financial problems so they discontinue their child's education. Destruction to these schools can even cause mental illness to many children. Sometime parents don't send their children to schools due to the extreme weather conditions they say they can't afford medication for their child, so they stop sending them. Reports have showed that the performance of a child is affected due to these weather conditions as it not only result in poor attendance but also their results (Lawler, 2011). So, the climate is a direct threat to the child right where the basic right to education is being denied. Greta Thunberg has been a catalyst for both young and adult activists and leaders since August 2018, when she began skipping college on Fridays to protest outside the Swedish Parliament (BBC News, 2024). Every Friday, many children participating in the movement known as Fridays for Future engage in protests to demand more aggressive measures from their governments and the global community.

Protection

Millions of children are uprooted by abrupt natural catastrophes, which puts them at danger of family breakup, orphanage, and, in the absence of adult supervision, exploitation, sexual abuse, and trafficking. It is impossible to measure how much natural disasters raise the risk of child trafficking because it is a covert activity, although news stories from nearly every recent disaster mention it (Montgomery, 2011). It is extremely difficult to evaluate and address the amount of children's vulnerability to trafficking, sale, and other forms of exploitation in the absence of quantitative, qualitative, and empirical evidence (Maalla M'jid, 2011).

IV. The United Nations Position: Analysing the Normative Framework

Role of UNCRC

The very idea behind establishment of the UN was to maintain international peace and security (Nadin, 2019) and to achieve cooperation among nations on economic, social, and humanitarian problems (Shvangiradze, n.d.). In furtherance to such an idea a specific international legal framework is made in 1989 with a promise to protect and fulfil the rights of every child the - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Lundy, 2007). This treaty contains a profound idea: children are not just adults in training or objects that belongs to their parents and for whom the decisions are made (MacDonald, 2006). So, according to this convention, childhood is viewed as a unique period of one's life that is protected by law and as defined lasts until the age of eighteen. The necessity that these children require during this period is the opportunity to develop, learn, play and grow with dignity (UNICEF, n.d.).

The CRC treats the rights to life, survival, and development of children, as well as the rights to participation, non-discrimination, and the best interests of the child, as guiding principles for the protection of children. These guiding concepts are crucial when creating climate change legislation that respects human rights and policy, as well as their successful integration and application, provide a significant obstacle for the

global community. The CRC also outlines States' obligations to safeguard children's rights to housing, food, health care, and education in the context of their unique needs.

The CRC, read together with the Declaration "A World Fit for Children," offers the framework for defending and upholding every child's right to a secure and healthy environment in which to grow and develop (Gruksin, 2001). The General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002 unanimously adopted the Declaration, which represents governments' pledge "to give every assistance to protect children and minimize the impact of natural disasters and environmental degradation on them." (Dillon et al., 2002) In summary, the CRC is a legally binding document based on public international law principles, but there is no independent organization to force states parties to abide by the Convention's requirements (United Nations, 2002).

Furthermore, there is no court system established by the Convention to which abuses of children's rights can be addressed, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the treaty body overseeing the Convention, cannot handle individual complaints (Gibbons, 2014). Nevertheless, the Convention is a crucial tool since it has raised awareness of violations of children's rights and has, frequently, led to better national legislation and policy that safeguards children's rights. Regarding the most severe types of child labour, the CRC's Optional Protocols hold significant relevance.

The US-UNCRC Conundrum

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by 190 United Nations members 35 years ago. It is a historic accord that has been approved more times than any other human rights treaty in history (Attiah, 2014). The CRC guarantees everyone the freedom from discrimination based on race, religion, sex, and a plethora of other characteristics, including those of their parents or legal guardians. The agreement upholds safeguards for children against forced labour, child marriage, and loss of legal identity. It also ensures that children, regardless of disability, have access to health care, education, and freedom of speech. It also includes parental leave and other protections for parents to care for their kids.

Opponents of ratifying the UNCRC contend that the United States already offers the rights outlined in the Convention. The US does not have a comprehensive legal framework to safeguard children's rights, and its many jurisdictions apply the law in different ways. For example, child sexual abuse is illegal in every state. However, depending on the state's criminal statute of limitations, someone may not be able to pursue justice for abuse they suffered as a child. Furthermore, the legal age of consent for sexual relations differs from state to state. In Atlanta, sixteen-year-olds can consent to sexual activity; in San Diego, they cannot. Some of the rights outlined in the UNCRC are provided by the federal government; these include the freedom of religion, protection from coerced military recruitment, and the right to free public education for children.

Conservative politicians like Jesse Helms and Jim DeMint, as well as organizations like ParentalRights.org, are among the opponents who worry that ratification may restrict parental rights and compromise family values. They contend that better strategies, such as changing current legislation, would be more appropriate for defending children's rights in the US (Braga, n.d.).

As the *Jones v. Mississippi* (2021) case demonstrates, difficulties still exist even despite significant advancements in juvenile justice reform brought about by Supreme Court decisions, such as the outlawing of the juvenile death penalty and the restriction on life without parole for crimes other than murder. Because upending the status quo would contradict several clauses of the Convention, the Biden-Harris administration is not anticipated to submit the UNCRC for ratification.

It is widely agreed that the US's current legal framework does not sufficiently shield all children from harm. People are urged by the call to action to advocate for all children to get equal protection, regardless of their circumstances or background.

Objectives Behind Ratification & The US Impact

A State may become a party to an agreement by either acceding to it or by signing and ratifying it. A State commits to protect, defend, and fulfil the rights outlined in the Convention or an Optional Protocol by formally accepting and becoming a party to it by ratification or accession. This commitment involves implementing or modifying the legislation and policies necessary to enforce the conditions of the agreement (Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, 1966).

Conservative politicians like Senators Jesse Helms and Jim DeMint, as well as organizations like ParentalRights.org, are among the UNCRC's detractors, claiming that ratification could restrict family freedoms and parental rights. They think that giving youngsters rights they aren't old enough to manage would disrupt the bond between parents and children. The UNCRC has been frozen for more than thirty years, despite its ability to address urgent concerns including child detention and labour. Due to concerns about controversy and upsetting the status quo, the Biden-Harris administration is unlikely to submit it to the Senate. However, it is recognised that the laws in place in the United States do not sufficiently safeguard every kid, so people are urged to support equal protection for all children, irrespective of their circumstances or background.

Apart from the United States, all UN members have accepted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which outlines 40 rights designed to promote children's health and wellbeing. Poor health results are a result of the US's failure to ratify and implement a child rights-based approach in comparison to other high-income countries (HICs). The USA's position has not changed despite advancements made globally, such as the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that center on children. Children are abused by the political system, as seen by laws that violate their rights and health. The CRC has been frequently attempted to be ratified, but support for children's rights is growing across the country. Prioritizing a child rights strategy is essential for enhancing the health of children and preventing political slide toward authoritarianism, even though ratification looks unlikely (The Economist, 2013).

This non-ratification carries specific consequences in the climate context. Because the United States is party neither to the Convention nor to its Third Optional Protocol, children in the United States cannot invoke the individual-complaints procedure that the petitioners used in *Sacchi et al. v. Argentina et al.*, and the interpretive guidance of the Committee on the Rights of the Child – including General Comment No. 26 – does not bind the federal government. American children seeking climate protection have therefore been left to a fragmented patchwork of constitutional and state-law litigation, with strikingly uneven results: the federal claim in *Juliana v. United States* was dismissed for want of standing and finally extinguished when the Supreme Court declined review in 2025 (*Juliana v. United States*, 2020), whereas youth plaintiffs prevailed under their state constitution's environmental guarantee in *Held v. Montana* (*Held v. Montana*, 2024) and secured a negotiated settlement in *Navahine v. Hawai'i Department of Transportation* (2024). The contrast illustrates how the absence of a ratified and uniformly implemented child-rights framework leaves the climate-related protection of children in the United States dependent on the accident of state constitutional text and judicial receptivity, rather than on a coherent national obligation owed to children as rights-holders.

V. Battling the Warm: Global & Domestic Safeguard Approaches

Battling Overseas: Role of International Organizations

Children's rights to be heard and best interests are often overlooked in international and national climate change frameworks, despite evidence of serious repercussions. Children under 18 have limited access to key policy procedures under the UNFCCC, such as core workstreams, decisions, and annual negotiations (Save the Children, 2019). Although the Children and Youth Constituency has provided a venue for youth participation, children are still underrepresented in these procedures. Children have unique concerns and demands that are often overlooked, while being part of the same group and facing similar difficulties. International Organizations like UNICEF, Red Cross, etc. also have an important role to play when it comes to protection of rights of child from climate change. The Paris Agreement's inclusion of children's rights in its preamble is a significant step forward. However, progress towards a rights-based strategy to climate action looks to be slow (Centre for International Environmental Law, 2018). There are various such examples, where international subjects like Red Cross, UNICEF and other local NGOs have played an important to protect rights of children.

The Bolivian Initiative

Once we commence with steps to protect rights of children from climate change, the most important factors to be considered are Health and Education. Substantial efforts were put in Bolivia to ensure that the Education part was protected of children. The Bolivian Ministry of Education and UNICEF partnered to ensure that children impacted by disasters had access to formal educational programmes, with a particular focus on indigenous students, particularly females. Bolivia has had a three-year period of natural disasters, which have included landslides, hailstorms, frosts, and flash floods. The indigenous inhabitants, who were already fragile, were disproportionately affected by these calamities, causing a significant devastation. A crisis module has been included into the ongoing project. The objective is to mitigate significant interruptions to the education of children during disasters or their immediate aftermath, with a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of females and other susceptible children. Additionally, the aim is to provide children, families, and schools with the necessary information and abilities to effectively manage the impact of catastrophes. The emergency component was introduced in five Bolivian departments in 2008 (Wright, 2007).

Situation At Kansas, US

Tornadoes are common in Kansas, United States. Several schools, as well as their safe areas, were devastated during one particularly catastrophic event in 1999. Fortunately, schools were not in session at the time. However, this tragic event acted as a catalyst, prompting schools to see the need for enhanced measures to ensure the safety of their pupils. The Wichita Public School District used a proactive measure to protect students by initiating a school shelter plan that included upgrading or constructing designated tornado shelters with advanced engineering. This led to an expanded initiative to create shelters, including both private and public schools throughout Kansas. Nowadays, many schools have designated safe rooms that serve as libraries, gyms, or other facilities when they are not being utilised as shelters. This ensures that these rooms are well kept and easily identifiable by the students (TN Viral Desk, 2023).

Zimbabwean Progress

Educational platforms may mitigate issues such as hunger and malnutrition in climate-affected regions by imparting knowledge on fundamental nutrition and

supplying nutritious meals to households via schools. Additionally, they may assist children in managing the stress that arises from natural disasters caused by climate change. Children, being the most susceptible, experience the most suffering in terms of stress and trauma after such catastrophic events. Children in Zimbabwe often have frequent illnesses, which significantly impede their ability to attend school. As of June 22, 2009, there were more than 98,550 confirmed cases of cholera, according to OCHA. The number of fatalities was 4,282. The current cholera epidemic is declining, but several contributing factors will persist over the next wet season. Precautionary measures are essential. A significant number of schools in Zimbabwe do not have access to clean water and proper sanitary facilities. The provision of municipal water is irregular, resulting in many dysfunctional toilets and crumbling pit latrines. As a reaction, the relevant Zimbabwean ministries, UNICEF, and two international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) initiated a programme aimed at advocating for proper hygiene practices in schools and mitigating the transmission of cholera and other contagious diseases. The earliest workshops highlighted the need of directing attention towards children (GOAL US, 2022).

The American Red Cross

Now that immediate worries about school security and uninterrupted instruction have been addressed, teachers and school administrators can concentrate on implementing sustainable disaster learning strategies. Strategies include the development of a comprehensive school curriculum that incorporates instructional modules on preparedness and resilience in the face of unforeseen calamities. The following case study demonstrates that in the United States, work in this particular topic has been successfully incorporated into the mainstream curriculum and is readily accessible, with some elements being available online. The American Red Cross, in collaboration with ISDR and UNESCO, developed a MOD (Masters of Disaster) curriculum to assist instructors in integrating Disaster Risk Reduction instruction into core subject areas. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) aimed to impart disaster preparation information to children aged 5-14 and their families. The objective was to encourage behaviour modification by equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to be completely prepared for future occurrences of this kind. This initiative has had significant success, reaching a total of 5.2 million students over the course of the previous 6 years. Furthermore, it has been completely included into the National curriculum.

There are various such case studies, where some of the non-governmental bodies have worked in interest of the children taking into consideration the effects of climate change on them. But at international level, there is no such instrument or body, which exclusively deals with protection of rights of children from climate change. Drawing an inspiration from various such case studies, there is need for the UN to step up and formulate a body specially to deal with climate change and child rights.

Appraising The UN Initiative

The United Nations in 2023, for the first time, the UN Committee on CRC recognised the right of children to a healthy, sustainable, and clean environment. It did so by realising a comprehensive interpretation for the signatories who have an obligation under the CRC (UN News, 2023). It is known as *General Comment on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change*, released on 22nd August 2023 (Right to Education Initiative, 2023). In this comment, the committee on CRC highlighted the immediate needs to address the negative impacts of degradation of the environment with mainly focusing on the climate change, and the rights of the children to enjoy the environment. It also underscores the States' responsibility to address this

major issue of environmental harm due to climate change. The committee also discussed on how the CRC also applies to protection of the environment, which now has affirmed that it would be the rights of the children across the globe to have clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (Centre for International Environmental Law, 2024). Children from at least 121 different countries, as well as representatives from civil society, international organisations, UN member states, and national human rights authorities, were among the many groups that contributed to the report's development. Environmental degradation and climate change are having a negative impact on children's lives and communities. They also feel entitled to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. They asked countries to work together worldwide to combat climate change, as well as for authorities to acknowledge and take action (Pandey, 2023). The new guideline urges UN member states to protect children's rights related to climate change from business-related harms through necessary, appropriate, and reasonable measures. Nations are advised to phase out coal, oil, and natural gas equitably, ensure a fair transition of energy sources, and invest in renewable energy, energy storage, and efficiency. Establishing inclusive early warning systems is emphasized to protect children from extreme weather impacts. The UN child rights committee calls for developed countries to provide grants instead of loans for climate actions in developing countries, highlighting concerns over unequal finance distribution for adaptation and loss and damage measures (Sheppard, 2023).

This is a major update at international level for protection child rights, there are various nations who have domestic legislations where right to clean environment has been recognised as a right not just to the citizen of such nations but to every person. But to have such recognition at international level, especially concerning the children, who are mostly ignored class when it comes to stake holding in talks related to rights.

General Comment No. 26 has since been reinforced by a wave of international jurisprudence that consolidates what scholars have termed a "rights turn" in climate change litigation (Peel & Osofsky, 2018). In *KlimaSeniorinnen v. Switzerland*, the European Court of Human Rights held that inadequate State climate action can itself violate human rights (*KlimaSeniorinnen v. Switzerland*, 2024), while the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights each confirmed that States owe stringent due-diligence obligations to prevent climate harm (International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, 2024; Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 2025). Most significantly, in its advisory opinion of 23 July 2025, the International Court of Justice held that States bear binding obligations under both treaty and customary international law to protect the climate system, that those duties are owed to present and future generations, and that climate-related harm impairs a wide range of human rights, expressly including the rights of children (International Court of Justice, 2025). Read together, these authorities convert language once dismissed as aspirational into concrete legal duties – a hardening of the due-diligence standard that doctrinal scholarship had already located in the customary obligation to prevent transboundary environmental harm (Mayer, 2023); yet none of them is child-specific, and the institutional machinery needed to translate them into enforceable protection for children in particular remains conspicuously absent.

COP 26 to COP 30: Decrypted

The Annual Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is a pivotal event for global climate action, where nearly all countries come together to address climate change. the Paris Agreement marked a historic moment in the fight against climate change. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, which only applied binding targets to developed countries, the Paris Agreement is a universal

accord that includes commitments from both developed and developing nations. The primary objective is to achieve a significant reduction in the rate of global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius. As part of the agreement's commitment to openness and responsibility, signatory nations will be forced to report on their emissions and climate targets on a regular basis. Leaders work to limit global temperature increases, assist vulnerable communities, and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The Paris Agreement, a key focus of COP, aims to cap global temperature increases well below 2°C, with efforts to limit them to 1.5°C. Recent focus on the 1.5°C target is driven by warnings from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The agreement requires greenhouse gas emissions to peak by 2025 and decline by 43% by 2030, marking a historic commitment by all nations to combat climate change (CRIN, 2023).

There have been many developments for fight against climate change through COPs, but until lately, the COPs didn't focus on impact of climate change. But at COP28, which was hosted by the UAE, Negotiators agreed to have a conversation in 2024 to address the disproportionate effects of climate change on children and to assess relevant policy options, marking the first time in nearly thirty years that the UNFCCC would formally incorporate consideration of children's vulnerability and wellbeing. This decision was supported by a coalition of allied nations. Children, who make up one-third of the world population, are particularly vulnerable to climate change, with deteriorating climatic risks limiting their access to rights and accounting for one in every four fatalities of children under the age of five owing to poor conditions (Ashing, 2021).

COP28 acknowledged the significance of children's meaningful participation in climate solutions and urged governments to engage youth and children in climate policy and action. The framework for the Global Goals on Adaptation promotes children's inclusion and intergenerational justice in adaptation targets and programs. However, COP28 failed to reach an agreement on an equitable, rapid, and fully supported phase-out of fossil fuels, which is critical for keeping global warming under 1.5°C. While progress has been made in terms of loss and damage, including the establishment of a fund and the receipt of pledges, more climate funding is still required. Furthermore, COP28 created gaps that must be filled to ensure that climate policies, particularly those involving unproven technology, do not affect biodiversity or the ocean, thus jeopardizing children's right to a healthy environment. Children and young people are increasingly voicing their concerns at COP, with their messages resonating throughout the conference venue and the Children and Youth pavilion providing a space for advocacy.

Thus, the upcoming period is very crucial as, the world is facing various natural calamities because of climate change, millions of people have been displaced due to the impacts of climate change. These displacements would severely damage the health of children. There are always talks in the community regarding climate change and its impact on children, but at the international level there are very few talks regarding the rights of children due to climate change. Every year, environmental factors take the lives of 1.7 million children under the age of five (Schlein, 2017). As per a latest report by UNICEF, 98% of African children Climate change poses a serious threat to the health, development, and safety of children in 98% of African countries, according to a new UNICEF research (Anderson, 2023). Thus, the negotiations that followed have proven crucial for the rights of children, and it remains important for global leaders and nations to grasp the importance of protecting them, as a report states that children born after 2020 will suffer 2.6 times as many drought events, 2.8 times as many river floods, and 6.8 times more heatwaves over their lifetime as those born in 1960 (Save the Children, n.d.).

Thus, protection of youth and thinking of inter-generational development shall be of paramount importance in the coming decade.

In the event, the commitment made at COP28 matured into the first Expert Dialogue on Children and Climate Change, convened at the Bonn climate conference (SB60) in June 2024, which channelled a set of child-rights recommendations into the negotiations that followed (UNICEF, 2024). COP29, held in Baku in November 2024, was dominated by finance and produced the Baku Climate Unity Pact and a new collective quantified goal on climate finance, yet it stopped short of anchoring children's distinct needs in its cover decision (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2024). COP30, convened in Belém in November 2025, went furthest yet: its "global mutirão" decision committed Parties to protect the climate system for present and future generations with explicit reference to children, youth and intergenerational equity, and more than 150 children participated directly – even as governments again declined to commit to treating children as a primary consideration across all climate decision-making and failed to agree a firm phase-out of fossil fuels (Child Rights International Network, 2025). The trajectory from COP26 to COP30 thus reveals genuine but halting movement: children are increasingly named in the texts, yet they are still not systematically protected by them. This pattern mirrors the wider career of intergenerational equity, a principle whose invocation has repeatedly outpaced its operative legal force as it migrates from expressive, preambular language toward prescriptive obligation (Bertram, 2023).

Analysing Across Borders

Norway

In the early 1990s, Norway introduced policies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which included a CO₂ tax, a pollution control licensing system, industry agreements, and methane, HFC, and PFC levies. These measures, together with an emissions trading scheme comparable to the EU's, helped to reduce emissions by 8-10 million tons of CO₂ equivalents by 2000. Norway is upgrading its estimations and has a thorough program on energy efficiency and renewable energy. The government established a commission to investigate strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50-80% by 2050, with a focus on technological deployment (Climate & Clean Air Coalition, n.d.). While Norway's emissions are low worldwide, it recognises the need for global action and intends to actively engage in finding solutions. It pushes for more transparency on international climate policy concerns and a level playing field for all countries. Norway welcomes fresh ideas for future climate change regimes and highlights the significance of sustainable development and fairness in any new agreements (Romeo, 2022).

Brazil

In March 2022, Brazil amended its NDC, committing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 37% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels. It also intends to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. However, Brazil has failed to submit its long-term low-GHG emission development strategy, as required by the Paris Agreement. Environmental aims under the country's federal development policy include biodiversity preservation and the reduction of unlawful deforestation. Deforestation and the loss of tropical savannah are significant issues, with deforestation rates deteriorating in recent years despite prior gains. The current administration's efforts to curb illicit deforestation have been called into doubt, and the results of the ongoing elections may have an impact on future environmental measures. Climate assessments grade Brazil's climate policy as insufficient, pointing out that the country is not contributing its fair share, and recommending more ambitious aims and stronger rules. The Climate Change

Performance Index indicates a lack of national-level emissions reduction strategies in Brazil, as well as underfunded and inadequately managed current policies (Climate Watch, n.d.).

India

Domestic climate and environmental policies in India aim to protect regional glaciers, make railways more environmentally friendly, reduce the use of single-use plastic, and provide clean fuel for cooking. The government has separated economic growth from emissions and plans to achieve net zero by the year 2070. India's historically low contribution to greenhouse gas emissions puts it in a strong position to pursue its net zero goal. India has condensed its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the Paris Agreement into 'enhanced objectives' to attain net zero emissions by 2070, harmonizing with industrialized countries.

The current NDC, submitted in August 2022, calls for a 45% decrease in GDP emissions intensity (relative to 2005 levels), 50% total installed electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources, and the LiFE Movement, which promotes sustainable lifestyles (World Economic Forum, 2023). While India's NDCs specify its energy portfolio ambitions, there are no sector-specific mitigation efforts, particularly for phasing out coal. Coal currently accounts for more than half of India's total installed power station capacity, underscoring the importance of a just transition strategy.

This approach, which seeks to address regional imbalances and manage job losses fairly, has gained popularity in Indian policy talks. India's involvement in the G7 Just Transition Energy Partnership demonstrates its commitment to moving away from coal (Choudhary, 2023).

VI. Conclusion

Children's safety, health, and education are already being negatively impacted by climate change, especially in high-risk countries as identified by the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.). To safeguard the estimated 3.5 billion children and youth by 2030 from the effects of climate change as well as to include them in its solutions, immediate action is required. Reassessing economic models to put the future first is necessary to address the climate catastrophe, particularly when considering the views of future generations and children. Comprehensive approaches are needed to address the long-term, short-term, and intergenerational effects of climate change, as well as the underlying social and economic inequality.

Investing more in climate adaptation for essential services like water, sanitation, health, and education are important steps. Other important ones include lowering greenhouse gas emissions sharply by 2030, teaching children's green skills and climate education, involving youth in all levels of decision-making, and making sure that the COVID-19 pandemic is recovered from in a way that is inclusive and sustainable (Luce, 2022). Since children are the least accountable for the climate problem, they will suffer the most from it, so it is imperative that we empower them to be change agents. The needs of the kids who are most in danger should come first, and they should be given the tools they need to handle the situation well. In the end, it's critical to provide kids and teens with the resources and encouragement they require to take on the difficulties we have left behind.

After analysing the instruments, jurisprudence and country experiences set out above, the author concludes that, although the violation of children's rights by climate change is now widely acknowledged in international discourse, concrete implementation continues to lag far behind recognition. The trajectory from COP26

through COP29 and COP30 illustrates this gap: children are increasingly named in negotiated texts, yet Parties have repeatedly declined to make them a primary consideration or to commit to a firm fossil-fuel phase-out, and the advisory opinions of 2024 and 2025, for all their normative force, remain general rather than child-specific. Three concluding observations follow from this evidence – addressed in turn to children’s knowledge, their voice, and their rehabilitation – and, beyond them, to the structural reform the analysis ultimately demands.

Expanding Knowledge

Article 6 of CRC states that *“Life, survival, and development. Every child has the inherent right to life, and the State has an obligation to ensure the child’s survival and development.”* It is often said one should try to learn from the experiences of others and in our case the best would be to learn from experiences of other children, starting with basic interventions that help children understand and navigate climate change and disasters. This could be achieved by training and awareness rising programs in classrooms itself. One could also learn from the example of Bangladesh how flood-proofing schools were built by elevating or floating buildings has been implemented to safeguard against seasonal floods. Securing school building are essential for keeping children safe and ensuring uninterrupted learning. Adapting schools provide an opportunity to enhance emergency procedures, update safety equipment, educate staff and students on emergency response, and conduct disaster preparedness drills.

By providing nutritious food to students and their families and teaching them about basic nutrition, schools can further contribute to the reduction of hunger and malnutrition in areas vulnerable to natural disasters. Lastly, when they are able to, schools can support children in managing the stress brought on by trauma associated to disasters, which can enhance kids’ mental and emotional wellbeing. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that schools cannot operate in isolation in this domain, and it is necessary to use non-formal education and community outreach to guarantee that assistance reaches children who have little or no access to formal schooling. Therefore, to ensure effective child-focused awareness, it is crucial to have safe and well-prepared schools with competent staff.

Promoting voice

Article 12 of the CRC states *“Respect of the child’s views. The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion considered in any matter or procedure affecting the child.”* It therefore shows us that children are an important part of the society, and they equally have the right to voice their opinions, they are recognised stakeholders in the community. Article 13 of the CRC states that, *“Freedom of expression. The child has the right to express his or her views, obtain information and make ideas or information known, regardless of frontiers.”* In the recent times there have been various young climate activists who have come up and voiced their opinions for protection of the environment. This aspect of child-focused Disaster Risk Reduction aims to empower children by going beyond mere knowledge transfer. The purpose of providing children with a platform to express their ideas is to increase their awareness of their needs, assist them in developing their analytical skills, and acknowledge their ability to make a positive impact. For instance, disaster committees prioritized children or designated child representatives because they recognised the substantial influence that children could have (sometimes because of their community involvement). When children are acknowledged and appreciated as contributing members of their communities, they may develop greater resilience to the consequences of climate change and natural disasters. In cases where the children have been displaced, most people focus on how to take care of adults, there are deliberations on how to safeguard the rights of children, but rarely

the impacted children are involved in such discourse. It is imperative that children are involved in such discourse, it will not just help them grow individually but it will also help the decision makers have reasoned decision which now has inputs from people who would be impacted by such decisions. The Red Cross has implemented numerous initiatives in the Solomon Islands with the objective of engaging the youth in the discussion of climate change and disaster awareness. Honiara, the capital city, has a programme that equips young people with the skills necessary to inform their peers about climate change in their institutions and communities. Additionally, the National Disaster Management Office and the Red Cross collaborated to develop a radio exam for schools that would instruct children on how to mitigate the impacts of disasters. The program, which included warnings about climate change, aired in the afternoon, when most students are at home, reaching listeners in Honiara and beyond (Climate Centre, n.d.). In practice, incorporating children into committees and other institutional structures can bring a new and valuable dimension to those institutions' work. Using peer educators or children to conduct risk assessments can minimize adult burden and increase communication effectiveness, as demonstrated in the Solomon Islands case study.

Rehabilitation

When considering data from India, it is evident how the National Disaster Response Force aids those affected by natural disasters, facilitating rescue efforts. However, due to limited resources and inadequate attention, the profound impact of such calamities on physical and mental well-being, particularly through displacement, is often overlooked. There is minimal discourse on the rehabilitation of displaced individuals, which is a fundamental necessity once displacement occurs, ensuring they have a place to call home. Often, children lose their parents due to climate change-related events, underscoring the state's responsibility to ensure their rehabilitation and care. Establishing specially designated facilities for displaced individuals is imperative, focusing not solely on existence but also encompassing essential amenities for basic living. These facilities should include schools for children and hospitals adequately staffed to cater to everyone's needs.

There are talks about climate change, recently most nations have started to fight against it and go for sustainable development. But the fact remains that most of these discussions just talk about reduction of green-house gases and how more renewable resources shall be given priority over non-renewable resources. There is just academic discourse on how the climate change has adversely affected children, there are very important questions like what about the rights of such children who are affected by climate change. There is urgent need for the states across the globe to start thinking about the rights of children in the world of climate change. Mere academic discourse won't help us fight for the rights of children, leaders shall start thinking and implementing proper measure to ensure that all the children are protected from climate change and those affected are properly taken care of.

As seen in China, where the youth population is decreasing, the government is urging the citizens to have more children. Thus, it is imperative for us to understand that if the youth is not taken care of now, it would only lead to destruction of humankind and most of the affected children would not survive for long as climate change affects life expectancy. For the holistic development of mankind, it is important that we consider needs of children and take proper care of them.

Toward a Dedicated International Mechanism for Children and Climate

Drawing the foregoing strands together, the principal contribution this article advances is a concrete one: the creation of a dedicated international mechanism for

children and climate change, situated within the United Nations system and bridging the child-rights and climate-governance regimes that presently run in parallel. The case for it follows directly from the gaps identified above. General Comment No. 26 and the 2024–2025 advisory opinions have supplied the substantive obligations, but no institution is charged with applying them to children specifically. The CRC creates no court, and its Committee cannot enforce its findings; *Sacchi* showed that even a sympathetic treaty body will turn children away on procedural grounds. The UNFCCC process, for its part, names children with increasing frequency yet affords them neither standing nor guaranteed protection.

Such a mechanism need not be built from nothing. It could take the form of a standing body – a Special Representative for Children and Climate, supported by an expert committee – with four core functions. First, it would consolidate the standards now dispersed across General Comment No. 26, the advisory opinions and the COP decisions into a single, child-centred framework against which State conduct can be measured. Second, it would audit the child-responsiveness of nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans, building on the Expert Dialogue first convened at Bonn in 2024. Third, it would administer an accessible complaints and early-warning procedure that does not founder on the exhaustion and standing barriers that defeated the petitioners in *Sacchi* and the plaintiffs in *Juliana*. Fourth, it would direct a ring-fenced share of adaptation finance toward the services – water, sanitation, health and education – on which children most depend. A framework of this kind would convert the present rhetoric of intergenerational equity into an institution accountable for delivering it, and would give the world’s children what they presently lack: a forum of their own.

Taken together, these strands point to a single conclusion grounded in the evidence assembled here. The doctrinal architecture is now largely in place: the Convention on the Rights of the Child supplies the substantive entitlements and the governing principle of the child’s best interests; General Comment No. 26 translates those rights into the environmental context; and the advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, together with *KlimaSeniorinnen*, confirm that States bear binding, due-diligence obligations owed to present and future generations alike. What the evidence equally shows, however, is a persistent enforcement deficit: *Sacchi* foundered on admissibility and *Juliana* on standing, while successive Conferences of the Parties have named children in their texts without binding themselves to protect them. The decisive variable is therefore no longer normative recognition but institutional design. Equipping children with knowledge, with a genuine voice, and with rehabilitation after disaster addresses the symptoms of the crisis; a dedicated international mechanism for children and climate addresses its cause, by furnishing the accountable forum that the present patchwork of treaty bodies, courts and conference decisions has so far failed to provide. Until such a forum exists, the rights affirmed on paper will continue to outrun the protection delivered in practice, and the youngest and least culpable will continue to bear the heaviest burden of a crisis they did not create.

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