



**Convention on the  
Rights of the Child**

Distr.: General  
18 March 2013  
**ADVANCE UNEDITED  
VERSION**  
Original: English

---

**Committee on the Rights of the Child**

**General comment No. 17 (2013)**

**The right of the child to rest, leisure, play,  
recreational activities, cultural life and the arts  
(Article 31)**

## Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction .....	1-6	3
II. Objectives of the General Comment .....	7	3
III. The significance of article 31 in Children’s lives.....	8-13	4
IV. Legal analysis of article 31.....	14-15	5
1. ‘States parties recognize the right of child to..’ .....		5
2. ‘States parties shall respect and promote the right of the child .....		7
V. Article 31 in the broader context of the convention .....	16-31	7
VI. Creating the context for the realisation of article 31 .....	32-47	10
VII. Children requiring particular attention in order to realise their article 31 rights .....	48-53	15
VIII. States parties’ obligations.....	54-59	17
IX. Dissemination.....	60-61	22

## I. Introduction

1. The importance of play and recreation in the life of every child has long been acknowledged by the international community, as evidenced by the commitment in the 1959 UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child that the child ‘*shall have full opportunity for play and recreation*’ and that ‘*society and public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right*’. This commitment was further strengthened in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) which explicitly recognises the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities and free and full participation in cultural and artistic life (Article 31).

2. However, the Committee, in its reviews of implementation of the rights of the child under the Convention, is concerned by the poor recognition given by States to Article 31 rights. Poor recognition of their significance in the lives of children results in lack of investment in appropriate provision, weak or non-existent protective legislation and invisibility of children in national and local level planning. In general, where investment is made, it is in the provision of structured and organised activities. Equally important is the need to create time and space for spontaneous play, recreation and creativity, and the promotion of societal attitudes that support and encourage such activity.

3. The Committee is particularly concerned about the difficulties faced by particular categories of children in the matters of enjoyment and in the conditions of equality, of the rights defined in article 31, especially girls, poor children, children with disabilities, indigenous children, children belonging to minorities, etc.

4. Furthermore, profound changes in the world in which children are growing up are having a major impact on their opportunity to enjoy Article 31 rights. The urban population, especially in developing countries, is increasing significantly as is the worldwide presence of violence in all its forms at home, in schools, through mass media and in the streets, with implications, alongside the commercialisation of play provision, is influencing the forms of children’s engagement in recreation, as well as cultural and artistic activities. For many children within both rich and poor countries, child labour, domestic work, or increasing educational demands serve to reduce the time available for enjoyment of these rights.

5. This General Comment has been developed to address these concerns, raise the profile, awareness and understanding among States as to the centrality of Article 31 rights in the life and development of every child and to elaborate measures to ensure their implementation. Article 31 rights have universal application in the diversity of communities and societies of the world and respect the value of all cultural traditions and forms. The rights are to be enjoyed by every child, regardless of the place where he/she lives, his/her cultural background or his/her parental status.

6. The General Comment does not address the issue of sport; sport is a major issue in its own right and is only touched on tangentially here. In respect of cultural life, it focuses primarily on aspects related to creative or artistic life, rather than the broader definition embraced within Article 30, the right of the child to enjoy his or her own culture.

## II. Objectives of the general comment

7. The present General Comment seeks to enhance the understanding of the importance of Article 31 for children’s well-being and development, to ensure and strengthen the application of and respect for the child’s right referred to in Article 31 and for the realisation of other rights in the Convention, and the implications for the determination of:

(a) Consequent obligations of States in the elaboration of all implementation's measures, strategies and programmes aimed at the realisation and full implementation of the rights of the child therein defined;

(b) Role and responsibilities of the private sector, including companies working in the areas of recreation, cultural and artistic activities, as well as organizations of civil society providing such services for children; and

(c) Guidelines for all individuals working with children, in all actions undertaken, including for parents.

### **III. The significance of article 31 in children's lives**

8. Article 31 must be understood holistically, both in terms of its constituent parts, and also in its relationship with the Convention in its entirety. Each element of Article 31 is mutually linked and reinforcing, and, when realised, serves to enrich the lives of children. Together, they describe conditions necessary to protect the unique and evolving nature of childhood. Their realisation is fundamental to the quality of childhood, to children's entitlement to optimum development, to the promotion of resilience, and to the realisation of other rights. For example, environments in which play and recreational opportunities are available to all children provide the conditions for creativity; opportunities to exercise competence through self-initiated play enhances motivation, physical activity and skill development; immersion in cultural life enriches playful interactions; rest ensures that children have the necessary energy and motivation to participate in play and creative engagement.

9. Play and recreation are essential to the health and well-being of children and promote the development of creativity, imagination, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and physical, social cognitive and emotional strength and skills. They contribute to all aspects of learning<sup>1</sup>. They are a form of participation in everyday life, and are of intrinsic value to the child, purely in terms of the enjoyment and pleasure they afford. Research evidence highlights that playing is also central to children's spontaneous drive for development, and that it performs a significant role in the development of brain, particularly in the early years. Play and recreation facilitate children's capacities to negotiate, regain emotional balance, resolve conflicts, and make decisions. Through their involvement in play and recreation, children learn by doing, explore and experience the world around them, experiment with new ideas, roles, and experiences, and in so doing, learn to understand and construct their social position within the world.

10. Both play and recreation can take place when children are on their own, together with their peers, or with supportive adults. Children's development can be supported by loving and caring adults as they relate to children through play. Participation with children in play provides adults with unique insights and understanding into the child's perspectives. It builds respect between generations, contributes to effective understanding and communication between children and adults, and affords opportunities to provide guidance and stimulus. Children benefit from recreational activities involving adults, including voluntary participation in organised sports, games, and other recreational activities. However, the benefits are diminished, particularly in developing creativity, leadership, and team spirit, if control by adults is so pervasive that it undermines children's own efforts to organise and conduct their play activities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Education for the twenty-first century: issues and prospects, UNESCO, Paris, 1998

11. Involvement in a community's cultural life is an important element of children's sense of belonging. Children inherit and experience the cultural and artistic life of their family, community and society and through that process, discover and forge their own sense of identity. They also contribute to the stimulation and sustainability of cultural life and traditional arts.

12. In addition, children reproduce, transform, create and transmit culture through, for example, their imaginative play, songs, dance, animation, stories, painting, games, street theatre, puppetry, festivals, etc. As they gain understanding of the cultural and artistic life around them from adult and peer relationships, they translate and adapt its meaning through their own generational experience. Through engagement with their peers, children create and transmit their own language, games, secret worlds, fantasies, and other cultural activities. Children's play generates a 'culture of childhood', from school and other playground games to urban activities such as marbles playing, free running, street art, etc. Children are also at the forefront of using digital platforms and virtual worlds to establish new means of communication and social networks through which different cultural environments and artistic forms are being forged. Participation in cultural and artistic activities are necessary for building children's understanding, not only of their own cultures, but also providing opportunities to broaden their horizons and learn from other cultural and artistic traditions, thus contributing towards mutual understanding and appreciation of diversity.

13. Finally, rest and leisure are as important to children's development as the basics of nutrition, housing, health care and education. Without sufficient rest, children will lack the energy, motivation and physical and mental capacity for meaningful participation or learning. Its denial can have an irreversible physical and psychological impact on the development, health and well-being of children. Children also need leisure, defined as time and space without obligations, entertainment or stimulus, which they can choose to fill as actively or inactively as they wish.

#### IV. Legal analysis of article 31

##### Para 1

14. **'States parties recognize the right of the child to...':**

(a) **'Rest'**: The right to rest requires that children are afforded sufficient respite from work, education or exertion of any kind, to ensure their optimum health and well-being. It also demands that they are provided with the opportunity for adequate sleep. In fulfilling the right to both respite from activity and time available for sleep, regard must be afforded to children's evolving capacities and their developmental needs.

(b) **'Leisure'**: Leisure represents the time in which play or recreation can take place. It is defined as free or unobligated time that does not involve formal education, work, home responsibilities, performing other life-sustaining functions, or engaging in activity directed from outside the individual. In other words it is largely discretionary time to be used as the child chooses.

(c) **'Play'**: Children's play as behaviour, activity, or processes initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves and it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise. Caregivers may contribute to the creation of environments in which it takes place, but play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and is undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end. It involves the exercise of autonomy, physical, mental or emotional activity, and has the potential to take infinite forms, either in groups or

alone. These forms will change and adapt throughout the course of childhood. The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity. Together, these factors contribute to the enjoyment it produces and the consequent incentive to continue to play. While play is often considered non-essential, the Committee reaffirms that it is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development.

(d) **‘Recreational activities’**: Recreation is an umbrella term used to describe a very broad range of activities, including, inter alia, participation in music, art, crafts, community engagement, clubs, sports, games, hiking and camping, and the pursuit of hobbies. It consists of activities or experiences, chosen voluntarily by children, either because of the immediate satisfaction they offer, or because they perceive some personal or social value to be achieved by them. It often takes place in spaces specifically designed for recreation. While many such activities may be organised and managed by adults, recreation should be a voluntary activity. Compulsory or enforced games and sports, or compulsory involvement in youth organisations do not constitute recreation.

(e) **‘Appropriate to the age of the child’**: The Convention emphasises the importance of opportunities appropriate to the evolving capacities of the child. In respect of play and recreation, the age of the child must be taken into account in determining: that sufficient free time is afforded; the nature of spaces and environments available to children; forms of stimulation and diversity; and the necessary degree of adult oversight and engagement to ensure that children are properly protected from hazards, while exercising their rights to play and recreation. As children grow older, they move from wanting settings that afford play opportunities, to places offering opportunities to socialise, to be with their peers, or to be alone. They will also explore progressively more opportunities for risk-taking and challenge. These experiences are developmentally necessary for adolescents, contributing to their discovery of identity and belonging.

(f) **‘Cultural life and the arts’**: The Committee endorses the view that it is through cultural life and the arts that children and their communities express their specific identity, the meaning they give to their existence, and build their world view representing their encounter with external forces affecting their lives<sup>2</sup>. Cultural and artistic expression is articulated and enjoyed in the home, schools, streets and public spaces, as well as dance, festivals, crafts, ceremonies, rituals, theatre, literature, music, cinema, exhibitions, film, digital platforms and video. Culture derives from the community as a whole: no child should be denied access either to its creation or to its benefits. Cultural life emerges from within the culture and community, rather than being imposed from above, with the role of States parties being to serve as facilitators not suppliers<sup>3</sup>.

(g) **‘To participate freely’**: The right of children to participate freely in cultural life and the arts requires that States parties respect, and abstain from interference in, the child’s access to, choice of and engagement in such activities, subject to the obligation to ensure the protection of the child and the promotion of the child’s best interests. Equally, they must ensure that others do not restrict that right. The decision by a child whether or not to exercise these rights is a choice and, as such, should be recognized, respected and protected.

---

<sup>2</sup> CESCR, Right of everyone to take part in cultural life, E/C.12/GC/21

<sup>3</sup> From Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City, 26 July - 6 August 1982

## Para 2

### 15. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child:

(a) **To participate fully in cultural and artistic life**: The right to participate fully has three inter-related and mutually reinforcing dimensions:

(i) **Access** which necessitates that children have the opportunity to experience cultural and artistic life, and are provided with opportunities to learn about a wide range of different forms of expression;

(ii) **Participation** which requires that concrete opportunities are guaranteed for children as groups or individuals to express themselves freely, to communicate, act, and engage in creative activities with a view to the full development of their personalities;

(iii) **Contribution to cultural life** which refers to the right of children to contribute towards the spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional expressions of culture and the arts, thereby contributing to the development and transformation of the society to which he or she belongs.

(b) **‘Encourage the provision of appropriate...opportunities’**: Although the requirement in para 2 to encourage provision of appropriate opportunities specifies only cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity, the Committee interprets it also to include play, as required by Article 4 of the Convention. States parties must therefore ensure the preconditions for participation, facilitation and promotion of opportunities for the implementation of all Article 31 rights. Children can only realise their rights if the necessary legislative, policy, budgetary, environmental and service framework is in place.

(c) **‘Equal opportunities’**: Every child must be afforded equal opportunities to enjoy his or her Article 31 rights.

## V. Article 31 in the broader context of the Convention.

### Links with general principles of the Convention

16. **The right to non-discrimination (article 2)**: The Committee emphasises that measures must be taken to ensure that all children are able to realise their rights under Article 31 without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. Particular attention is needed to address the rights of some groups of children including, inter alia, girls, children with disabilities, children living in poor or hazardous environments, children living in poverty, children in penal, health or residential institutions, children in situations of conflict or humanitarian disaster, children in rural communities, asylum seeking and refugee children, children in street situations, nomadic groups, migrant or internally displaced children, indigenous children and minority groups, working children, children without parents, and children subjected to significant pressure for academic attainment.

17. **The best interests of the child (article 3, para.1)**: The Committee emphasises that the realisation of Article 31 rights is, by definition, in the child's best interests. The obligation to consider the child's best interests applies to children, both as individuals and as a group or constituency. All legislative, policy, and budgetary measures, as well as those relating to environmental or service provision, which are likely to impact on Article 31 rights, need to give consideration as to whether they are consistent with the best interests of children. This might apply, for example, to regulations relating to health and safety, solid

waste disposal and collection, residential and transportation planning, design and accessibility of the urban landscape, provision of parks and other green spaces, determination of school hours, child labour and education legislation, planning applications, or legislation governing privacy on the Internet.

18. **The right to life, survival and development (article 6):** State parties must ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the development of the child. In this regard, the Committee draws attention to the need for recognition of the positive value of each dimension of Article 31 in promoting the development and evolving capacities of children. It also requires that measures are introduced to implement Article 31 in accordance with the developmental needs of children at all ages. States parties should promote awareness and understanding of the centrality of play for children's development among parents, caregivers, government officials and all professionals working with and for children.

19. **The right to be heard (article 12):** Children, both as individuals and as a group, have the right to express their views on all matters of concern to them, and should be given due weight, in accordance with their age and maturity and that they should receive adequate support to express their views, where necessary. Children are entitled to exercise choice and autonomy in their play and recreational activities, as well as in their participation in cultural and artistic activities. The Committee underlines the importance of providing opportunities for children to contribute to the development of legislation, policies, strategies and design of services to ensure the implementation of Article 31 rights. This might include their involvement, for example, in consultations on policies related to play and recreation, legislation affecting educational rights and school organisation and curriculum or protective legislation on child labour, the development of parks and other local facilities, urban planning and design for child friendly communities and environments, feedback on opportunities for play, or recreation and cultural activities within the school and the wider community<sup>4</sup>.

#### **Links with other relevant rights**

20. **Article 13:** Respect for freedom of expression is fundamental to the right to participate freely in cultural and artistic activity. Children are entitled to express themselves in whatever way they choose, subject to restrictions only as defined by law and when necessary to ensure respect for the rights and reputations of others and for the protection of public order and public health or morals.

21. **Article 15:** Children have the right to exercise choice in their friendships, as well as memberships of social, cultural, sporting and other forms of organisation. These freedoms represent an integral dimension of their Article 31 rights. Children together create forms of imaginative play that are rarely achieved in adult-child relations. Children need engagement with peers of both sexes, as well as people of different abilities, classes, cultures and ages, in order to learn co-operation, tolerance, sharing and resourcefulness. Playing and recreation create the opportunities for formation of friendships, and can play a key role in strengthening civil society, contributing towards social, moral and emotional development, and shaping culture and building communities. State parties must facilitate opportunities to enable children to meet freely with their peers at the community level. They must also respect and support the right of children to establish, join and leave associations and the right to peaceful assembly. However, children should never be compelled to participate or join organisations.

---

<sup>4</sup> See CRC General Comment No.12, The Right of the Child to be heard, CRC/CGC/12, July 2009



22. **Article 17:** Children are entitled to information and materials which are of social and cultural benefit, and which derive from a diversity of community, national and international sources. Such access is essential for the realisation of their right to participate fully in cultural and artistic activity. States parties are encouraged to ensure that children are provided with the widest possible sources of access, through different media, to materials related to their own culture and to others, and in their own languages, including, for example, sign language and in alternative formats such as Braille, including by permitting exceptions to copyright laws to ensure the availability of printed materials in alternative formats. In so doing, care must be taken to protect and preserve cultural diversity, and to avoid cultural stereotypes.

23. **Article 22:** Refugee and asylum seeking children face profound challenges in realising their Article 31 rights, often experiencing both dislocation from their own traditions and culture, and exclusion from the culture of the host country. Efforts must be made to ensure that refugee and asylum seeking children have equal opportunities, with children from their host country, to enjoy their Article 31 rights. Recognition must also be afforded to the right of refugee children to preserve and practice their own recreational, cultural and artistic traditions.

24. **Article 23:** For children with disabilities to be able to enjoy their Article 31 rights, accessible and inclusive environments and facilities must be available<sup>5</sup>. Families, caregivers and professionals need to recognise the value of inclusive play both as a right and a means of achieving optimum development. Opportunities for children with disabilities, as equal and active participants in play, recreation and cultural and artistic life, need to be encouraged by awareness-raising amongst adults and peers, and by age-appropriate support or assistance.

25. **Article 24:** Not only does the realisation of Article 31 rights contribute to the health, well-being and development of children, but appropriate provision for children to enjoy Article 31 rights when they are ill or in hospital will play an important role in facilitating their recovery.

26. **Article 27:** Inadequate standard of living, insecure or overcrowded conditions, unsafe environments, unsanitary outdoor conditions, inadequate food, or enforced harmful or exploitative work can all serve to limit or deny children the opportunity to enjoy their Article 31 rights. States parties are encouraged to have regard to the implications for children's rights under Article 31 in policies relating to social protection, employment, housing and access to public spaces for children living without opportunities for play and recreation in their own homes.

27. **Articles 28, 29:** Education must be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to the fullest potential. Implementation of Article 31 rights is essential to achieving compliance with Article 29. For children to optimise their potential, they require opportunities for cultural and artistic development as well as participation in sports and games. The Committee also emphasises that Article 31 rights are of positive benefit to children's educational development and that inclusive education and inclusive play are mutually reinforcing and should be facilitated during the course of every day throughout early childhood education and care and school (hereinafter: school). While relevant for all children, play is particularly significant in the early years of schooling where research evidence demonstrates that play is an important means through which children learn.

---

<sup>5</sup> See Articles 7, 9, and 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

28. **Article 30:** Children from ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities should be encouraged to enjoy and participate in their own cultures. States should respect the cultural specificities of children from minority communities as well as indigenous peoples, and ensure that they are afforded equal rights with children from majority communities to participate in cultural and artistic activities reflecting their own language, religion and culture.

29. **Article 32:** The Committee notes that in many countries children are engaged in arduous work which denies them their rights under Article 31. In addition, millions of children are working as domestic workers or in non-hazardous occupations with their families without adequate rest or education, throughout most of their childhood. Measures are needed to protect all child workers from conditions that violate their Article 31 rights.

30. **Articles 19, 34, 37, 38:** Violence, sexual exploitation, deprivation of liberty by unlawful or arbitrary means, and forced service in armed conflicts impose conditions that seriously impede or even eliminate children's abilities to enjoy play, recreation and participation in cultural life and the arts. Bullying by other children can also serve as a major impediment. Article 31 rights can only be realized when States parties take all necessary measures to protect children from such harm.

31. **Article 39:** Children who have experienced neglect, exploitation, abuse, or any other forms of violence are entitled to help with recovery and reintegration. Children's experiences and knowledge, including those which are painful and damaging, can be communicated through play or artistic expression. Opportunities to realise Article 31 rights provide a valuable means through which they can play out traumatic or difficult life experiences in order to make sense of their past and cope better with their future. It enables them to communicate, better understand their own feelings and thoughts, prevent or resolve psychosocial challenges, learn to manage relationships and conflicts through a natural, self-guided, self-healing process.

## VI. Creating the context for the realisation of article 31

### Factors for an optimum environment

32. Children have a spontaneous urge to play and participate in recreational activities and will seek out opportunities to do so in the most unfavourable environments. However, certain conditions need to be assured, in accordance with children's evolving capacities, if they are to realise, to the optimum extent, their Article 31 rights:

- Freedom from stress;
- Freedom from social exclusion, prejudice or discrimination;
- An environment secure from social harm or violence,
- An environment sufficiently free from waste, pollution, traffic and other physical hazards to allow children to move freely and safely within their local neighbourhood;
- Availability of rest appropriate for their age and development;
- Availability of leisure time which is free from other demands;
- Accessible space and time for play which is free from adult control and management;
- Space and opportunities to play outside unaccompanied in a diverse and challenging physical environment, with easy access to supportive adults, when appropriate;

- Opportunities to interact with, and play in natural environments and experience the animal world;
- Opportunities to create or transform spaces and times where they can invest in their own worlds, imagination and languages;
- Opportunities to explore and understand the cultural and artistic heritage of one's community, to participate within it, and to create and shape it;
- Opportunities for participation with other children in games, sports, and other recreational activities, supported, where necessary, by well-trained facilitators or coaches;
- Recognition by parents, teachers and the wider society of the value and legitimacy of Article 31 rights.

### **Challenges to be addressed in the realisation of Article 31**

33. **Lack of awareness of the importance of play and recreation:** In many parts of the world, play is perceived as 'deficit' time spent in frivolous or unproductive activity of no intrinsic worth. Parents, caregivers and public administrators commonly place a higher priority on studying or economic work, while play is often seen as noisy, dirty, disruptive and intrusive. Moreover, adults often lack the confidence, skill or understanding to enable them to support children's play and interact with them in a playful way. Both the right of children to engage in play and recreation, and its fundamental importance for their well-being, health and development, are poorly understood and undervalued. When it is recognised, it is usually physically active play and competitive games that are valued above, for example, fantasy or social-dramatic play. The Committee emphasises that greater recognition of the forms and locations of play and recreation preferred by older children is particularly necessary. They often seek places to meet with their peers, and explore their emerging independence and transition to adulthood, which are an important dimension of adolescent exploration for identity and belonging.

34. **Poor and hazardous environments:** Features in the environment, which impact on Article 31 rights, can either serve as protective or risk factors in terms of children's health, development and safety. In respect of younger children, spaces which provide opportunities for children's exploration and creativity should allow for parents and caregivers to maintain oversight, including by means of eye and voice contact. Children need access to inclusive spaces free from inappropriate hazards, close to their own homes, together with measures to promote safe, independent mobility as their capacities evolve.

35. The majority of the world's poorest children face physical hazards such as polluted water, open sewer systems, over-crowded cities, uncontrolled traffic, poor lighting and congested streets, inadequate public transport, lack of local safe play areas, green spaces or cultural facilities, and urban informal 'slum' settlements in hazardous, violent or toxic environments. In post-conflict environments, children can also be harmed by landmines and unexploded ordnances. Children are at particular risk, both because their natural curiosity and exploratory play increases the likelihood of exposure, and because the impact of an explosion is greater on a child.

36. Human factors can also combine to place children at risk in the public environment: high levels of crime and violence, community unrest and civil strife, drug and gang-related violence, risk of kidnapping and child trafficking, open spaces dominated by hostile adults, and aggression and sexual violence towards girls. Even where parks, playgrounds, sports facilities and other provision exist, they are often in locations where children are at risk, unsupervised and exposed to hazards. The dangers posed by all these factors severely restrict children's opportunities for safe play and recreation. The increasing erosion of

many traditional spaces available to children creates a need for greater government intervention to protect Article 31 rights.

37. **Resistance to children's use of public spaces:** Children's use of public space for play, recreation and their own cultural activities is also impeded by the increasing commercialization of public areas, from which children are excluded. In addition, in many parts of the world, there is decreasing tolerance of children in public spaces. The introduction of, for example, curfews on children, gated communities or parks, reduced tolerance of noise levels, playgrounds with strict rules for acceptable play behaviour, and restrictions on access to shopping malls, builds a perception of children as 'problems', and serves to demonise them. Adolescents, in particular, are widely perceived as a threat by widespread negative media coverage and representation. and discouraged from use of public spaces.

38. The exclusion of children has significant implications for their development as citizens. Shared experienced of inclusive public spaces across the age span serves to promote and strengthen civil society and encourage children to recognise themselves as citizens with rights. Therefore, States are encouraged to promote dialogue between older and younger generations to encourage greater recognition of children as rights holders and of the importance of networks of diverse community spaces in a local area which can accommodate the play and recreational needs of all children.

39. **Balancing risk and safety:** Fears over the physical and human risks to which children are exposed within their local environments are leading, in some parts of the world, to increasing levels of monitoring and surveillance, with consequent constraints on their freedom to play and opportunities for recreation. In addition, children can themselves pose a threat to other children in their play and recreational activities – for example, bullying, abuse of younger children by older children, and group pressure to engage in high levels of risk taking. While children must not be exposed to harm as a consequence of their Article 31 activities, some degree of risk and challenge is integral to play and recreational activities and a necessary component of its benefits. A balance is needed between, on the one hand, taking action to reduce the unacceptable hazards in the children's environment, such as closing local streets to traffic, improving street lighting, or creating safe boundaries for playgrounds in schools, and on the other hand, informing, equipping and empowering children to take the necessary precautions to enhance their own safety. The best interests of the child, and listening to children's own experience and concerns, should be mediating principles to determine the level of risk which children can experience.

40. **Lack of access to nature:** Children come to understand, appreciate and care for the natural world through exposure to it, through self-directed play, and exploration with adults who communicate its wonder and significance. Memories of childhood play and leisure in nature strengthen resources with which to cope with stress, inspire a sense of spiritual wonder and encourage stewardship for the earth. Play in natural settings also contributes towards agility, balance, creativity, social cooperation, and concentration. Connection to nature through gardening, harvesting, ceremonies, and time for peaceful contemplation is an important dimension of the arts and heritage of many cultures. In an increasingly urbanized and privatized world, children's access to parks, gardens, forests, beaches and other natural areas is being eroded. Children in low income urban areas are most likely to lack adequate access to green spaces.

41. **Pressure for educational achievement:** Article 31 rights are being denied for children in many parts of the world as a consequence of an emphasis on formal academic success. For example:

- Early childhood education is increasingly focused on academic targets and formal learning at the expense of participation in play and attainment of broader development outcomes;
- Extra-curricular tuition and homework are intruding into children's time at the expense of freely chosen activities;
- The curriculum and daily schedule often lacks recognition of the necessity of, or provision for, play, recreation and rest;
- The use of formal or didactic educational methods in the classroom do not take advantage of opportunities for active playful learning;
- Contact with nature is decreasing in many schools with children having to spend more time indoors;
- Opportunities for cultural and artistic activities and provision of specialist arts educators within school are, in some countries, being eroded in favour of more academic subjects.
- Restrictions on the type of play in which children can engage within school serve to inhibit children's opportunities for creativity, exploration and social development.

42. **Overly structured and programmed schedules:** For many children, their Article 31 rights are restricted by the imposition of adult-led activities including, for example, compulsory sports, rehabilitative activities for children with disabilities or, particularly for girls, domestic chores, which allow little or no time for self-directed activity. Where government investment exists, it tends to focus on organised competitive recreation, and some children are required or pressurised to participate in youth organisations not of their own choosing. Children are entitled to time that is not determined or controlled by adults. They also have a right to have time in which to be free of any demands – to do 'nothing'. Indeed, absence of activity can serve as a stimulus to creativity. Narrowly focusing all children's leisure time into programmed and competitive ventures can be damaging to children's physical, emotional, cognitive and social well-being.<sup>6</sup>

43. **Neglect of Article 31 in development programmes:** Early childhood care and development work in many countries focuses exclusively on issues of child survival with no attention paid to the subsequent thriving of children. Programmes often only deal with nutrition, immunization and preschool education. They place little or no emphasis on play, recreation, culture and arts, and staff running the programmes are not appropriately trained to support these aspects of children's development needs.

44. **Lack of investment in cultural and artistic opportunities for children:** Children's access to cultural and artistic activities are often restricted by a range of factors including lack of parental support, costs of access, lack of availability of transport, adult-centred focus of many exhibitions, plays and events, and a failure to engage them in the content, design, location and forms of provision. Greater emphasis is needed in the creation of spaces to stimulate creativity. Arts and cultural venues should reach beyond their physical spaces to consider how their programmes reflect and respond to the cultural lives of the community they represent. Children's participation in the arts requires a more child-centred approach, both commissioning and displaying children's own creativity, and also engaging them in the structure and programmes. Such engagement during childhood can serve to stimulate cultural interests for life.

---

<sup>6</sup> Pais, M S, The Convention on the Rights of the Child, in Manual of Human Rights Reporting, OHCHR, 1997

45. **The growing role of electronic media:** Children in all regions of the world are spending increasing periods of time engaged in play, recreational, cultural and artistic activities, both as consumers and creators, using various digital platforms and media: watching television, messaging, social networking, gaming, texting, listening to and creating music, watching and making films, creating new art forms and posting images. Information and communication technologies are emerging as a central dimension of children's daily reality and they move seamlessly from the offline to the online environments. These platforms offers huge benefits – educationally, socially and culturally – and States parties are encouraged to take all necessary measures to ensure equality of opportunity for all children to experience those benefits. Access to the Internet and social media are central to the realisation of Article 31 rights in the globalised environment.

46. However, the Committee is concerned at the growing body of evidence indicating the extent to which these environments, as well as the amounts of time spent on them, can also contribute to significant potential risk and harm to children<sup>7</sup>:

- Access to the Internet and social media is exposing children to cyberbullying, pornography and cybergrooming. Many children attend internet cafes, computer clubs and game halls without adequate restrictions in access or effective monitoring systems;
- The increasing levels of participation, particularly among boys, in violent video games appears to be linked with aggression because the games are highly engaging and interactive, reward violent behaviour, tend to be played repeatedly, thus strengthening negative learning, and can contribute to reduced sensitivity to the pain and suffering of others, and more likelihood of aggressive or harmful behaviour toward others. The growing opportunities for online gaming, where children can expose to a global network of users, without filters or protections, are also a cause for concern.
- Much of the media, particularly mainstream television, fails to reflect the language, cultural values, and creativity of the diversity of cultures that exist across the society. Not only does such mono-cultural viewing limit opportunities for all children to benefit from the potential breadth of cultural activity available, but it can also serve to affirm the lower value placed on other than mainstream cultures. It is also contributing to the loss of many childhood games, songs, rhymes that have been transmitted through many generations on the street and playground.
- Growing dependence on screen activities is thought to be associated with reduced levels of physical activity among children, poor sleep patterns, growing levels of obesity and other related illnesses.

47. **Marketing and commercialisation of play:** The Committee is concerned that many children and their families are exposed to increasing levels of unregulated marketing by toy and game manufacturers. They are pressured to purchase a growing number of products which may be harmful to their development or antithetical to creative play: for example, products marketed to promote television programmes, with established characters and storylines which impede imaginative exploration; toys with embedded microchips which reduce the child to the role of a passive observer; kits which pre-determine the pattern of activity; toys which promote traditional and narrow gender stereotypes or promote early sexualisation of girls; toys containing dangerous chemicals or parts; realistic

---

<sup>7</sup> Child Protection Online: Global Challenges and Strategies Technical report, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence 2012

war toys and games. Global marketing can also serve to weaken children's participation in the traditional cultural and artistic life of their community.

## VII. Children requiring particular attention to realise article 31 rights

48. **Girls:** A combination of significant burdens of domestic responsibilities and sibling and family care, protective concerns on the part of parents, lack of appropriate facilities, and cultural assumptions imposing limitations on the expectations and behaviour of girls, can serve to diminish their opportunities to enjoy Article 31 rights, particularly in adolescence. In addition, gender differentiation in the forms of girls' and boys' play, which are widely reinforced by parents and caregivers, the media, and commercial producers of games and toys, serve to maintain traditional sex-role divisions in society. Evidence indicates that whereas boys' games prepare them for successful performance in a wide range of work and other settings in modern society, in contrast, girls' games tend to direct them towards the private sphere of the home and future roles as wives and mothers. Adolescent boys and girls are often discouraged from engaging in joint recreational activities. Furthermore, girls generally have lower participation rates in physical activities and organised games as a consequence of either external cultural or self imposed exclusion, or lack of appropriate provision. This pattern is of concern in light of the proven physical, psychological, social, intellectual benefits associated with participation in sporting activities<sup>8</sup>. Given these widespread and pervasive barriers impeding the realisation for girls of their Article 31 rights, the Committee urges State parties to take action to challenge gender stereotypes, which serve to compound and reinforce patterns of discrimination and inequality of opportunity.

49. **Children living in poverty:** Lack of access to provision, inability to afford participation, dangerous and neglected neighbourhoods, the necessity to work, and a sense of powerlessness and marginalisation all serve to exclude the poorest children from realising Article 31 rights. For many, the risks to their health and safety outside the home are compounded by home environments which provide no space or scope for play or recreation. Children without parents are particularly vulnerable to loss of Article 31 rights. Children in street situations are afforded no play provisions, and are commonly actively excluded from city parks and playgrounds, although they use their own creativity to utilise the informal setting of the streets for play opportunities. Municipal authorities must recognise the importance of these spaces for the realisation of Article 31 rights for children living in poverty, and engage in dialogue with them in respect of policing, planning and development initiatives. Action is needed to ensure that both access and opportunities to cultural and artistic activities exists for all children, as well as equal opportunities for play and recreation.

50. **Children with disabilities:** Multiple barriers impede access to Article 31 rights for children with disabilities: exclusion from school, informal and social arenas where friendships are formed, and play and recreation take place; isolation within the home; cultural attitudes and negative stereotypes which are hostile to and rejecting of children with disabilities; physical inaccessibility of, inter alia, public spaces, parks, playgrounds and equipment, cinemas, theatres, concert halls, and sports facilities and arenas; policies which exclude them from sporting or cultural venues on safety grounds; communication barriers and failure to provide interpretation and adaptive technology; and lack of accessible transport. Children with disabilities can also be excluded if investment is not

<sup>8</sup> UNESCO International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, 1978

made to render radio, television, computers and tablets accessible, including through the use of assistive technologies. In this regard, the Committee welcomes Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which emphasises the obligations on States parties to ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation, sporting and leisure activities, including in the mainstream school system. Pro-active measures are needed to remove the barriers and promote accessibility to and availability of inclusive opportunities to participate in all these activities<sup>9</sup>.

51. **Children in institutions:** Many children spend all or part of their childhoods in institutions, including, inter alia, residential homes and schools, hospitals, detention centres, remand homes, and refugee centres, where opportunities for play, recreation and participation in cultural and artistic life may be limited or denied. The Committee stresses that States need to work towards the de-institutionalisation of children, but until that goal is reached, they should adopt measures to ensure that all such institutions guarantee both spaces and opportunities for children to associate with their peers in the community, to play, and to participate in games, physical exercise, culture and artistic life. Such measures should not be restricted to compulsory or organised activities: safe and stimulating environments are needed for children to engage in free play and recreation. Wherever possible, children should be afforded these opportunities within local communities. In institutions where children live for significant periods of time, they also require appropriate literature, periodicals, and access to the Internet, as well as support to enable them to make use of them. Availability of time, appropriate space, adequate resources and equipment, trained and motivated staff and provision of dedicated budgets are needed to create the necessary environments to assure to every child living in an institution that their Article 31 rights will be realised.

52. **Children from indigenous and minority communities:** Ethnic, religious, racial or caste discrimination can serve to exclude children from realising Article 31 rights. Fear of hostility, assimilation policies, rejection, violence and discrimination may result in barriers to enjoyment of their own cultural practices, rituals and celebrations, as well as participation in sports, games, cultural activities, and play and recreation, alongside other children. States have obligations to recognise, protect and respect the right of minority groups to take part in the cultural and recreational life of the society as well as to conserve, promote and develop their own cultural life<sup>10</sup>. However, children from indigenous communities also have the right to experience and explore cultures beyond the boundaries of their own families' traditions. Cultural and artistic programmes must be based on inclusion, participation and non-discrimination.

53. **Children in situations of conflict, humanitarian and natural disasters:** Article 31 rights are often given lower priority in situations of conflict or disaster than provision of food, shelter and medicines. However, in these situations, opportunities for play, recreation and cultural activity can perform a significant therapeutic and rehabilitative role helping children recover a sense of normality and joy after experiencing loss, dislocation and trauma. Refugee children, and those who have experienced, for example, bereavement, violence, abuse or exploitation can be helped, through play, music, poetry, or drama, to overcome emotional pain, and regain control over their lives, restore a sense of identity, make meaning of what has happened to them, and experience fun and enjoyment. Participation in cultural or artistic endeavours, as well as in play and recreation, offers children an opportunity to engage in a shared experience, to re-build a sense of personal

---

<sup>9</sup> CRC General Comment, No.9 The Rights of Children with Disabilities, CRC/C/GC/9, Sept 2006

<sup>10</sup> UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 61/295, 2007



value and self-worth, to explore their own creativity, and to achieve a sense of connectedness and belonging. Settings for play also provide opportunities to identify children suffering from harmful impact of conflict.

## VIII. States parties' obligations

54. Article 31 imposes an obligation on States parties to guarantee that the rights it embodies are realised for every child without discrimination, and, as with all other rights, imposes three types of obligation:

(a) The obligation *to respect* requires States parties to refrain from interfering, directly or indirectly, with the enjoyment of Article 31 rights;

(b) The obligation *to protect* requires States parties to take steps to prevent third parties from interfering with Article 31 rights;

(c) The obligation *to fulfil* requires States parties to introduce the necessary legislative, administrative, judicial, budgetary, promotional and other measures aimed at the full enjoyment of Article 31 rights by undertaking action to make available all necessary services, provision and opportunities.

55. While the Convention provides for 'progressive realisation' of economic, social and cultural rights, and recognises the problems arising from limited resources, it imposes on States parties the specific and continuing obligation, even where resources are inadequate, to '*strive to ensure the widest possible enjoyment of the relevant rights under the prevailing circumstances*'<sup>11</sup>. No regressive measures in relation to the Article 31 rights are permitted. If any such deliberate measure was taken, the State would need to prove that it had undertaken careful consideration of all alternatives, including giving due weight to children's expressed views on the issue, and that the decision was justified bearing in mind all other rights in the Convention.

56. The obligation to respect rights includes the adoption of specific measures aimed at achieving respect for the right of every child, individually, or in association with others, to realise their Article 31 rights, including:

(a) **Support for caregivers:** Guidance, support and facilitation on the Article 31 rights should be provided for parents and other caregivers in line with article 18 (2). Such training might offer practical guidance, for example, on how to: listen to children while playing; create environments that facilitate children's play; allow children to play freely; and play with children. It could also address the importance of encouraging creativity and dexterity; balancing safety and discovery; and the developmental value both of play and of guided exposure to cultural, artistic and recreational activities.

(b) **Awareness raising:** Investment is needed in measures to challenge widespread cultural attitudes which attach low value to Article 31 rights. States should invest in:

- public awareness of both the right to, and the significance of play, recreation, rest, leisure and participation in cultural and artistic activities for both boys and girls of all ages in contributing to the enjoyment of childhood, promoting the optimum development of the child and building positive learning environments;
- measures to challenge the pervasive negative attitudes, particularly towards adolescents, which lead to restrictions on the opportunities for the enjoyment of

<sup>11</sup> General Comment No.5 HRI/GEN/1/Rev.6 para 11, p16

Article 31 rights. In particular, opportunities should be created for children to represent themselves in the media.

57. The obligation to protect rights requires that States parties take action to prevent third parties from interfering with or restricting the rights embodied in Article 31. Accordingly, States are obliged to undertake the following measures:

**(a) Non-discrimination:** Legislation is required to guarantee access for every child, without discrimination on any ground, to all recreational, cultural and artistic environments including public and private spaces, natural space, parks, playgrounds, sporting venues, museums, cinemas, libraries, theatres, and to cultural activities, services and events.

**(b) Regulation of non-state actors:** Legislation, regulations and guidelines should be introduced, together with the necessary budgetary allocation, and effective mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement, to ensure that all members of civil society, including the corporate sector, comply with the provisions of Article 31, including, inter alia:

- employment protection for all children to guarantee appropriate limitations on the nature, hours and days of work, rest periods and facilities for recreation and rest, consistent with their evolving capacities. States are also encouraged to ratify and implement ILO Conventions 79, 90, 138 and 182<sup>12</sup>.
- establishment of safe and accessibility standards for all play and recreational facilities, toys, and games equipment;
- obligations to incorporate provision and opportunity for the realisation of Article 31 rights in urban and rural development proposals;
- protection from cultural, artistic or recreational material which might be injurious to children's well-being, including systems of protection and classification governing media broadcasting and film, taking into account the provisions of both Article 13, freedom of expression and Article 18, the responsibilities of parents.
- The Committee also considers that there should be introduction of regulations prohibiting the production of realistic war games and toys for children.

**(c) Protection of children from harm:** Child protection policies, procedures, professional ethics, codes and standards for all professionals working with children in the field of play, recreation, sports, culture and the arts must be introduced and enforced. Recognition must also be given to the need to protect children from potential harm imposed by other children in the exercise of their Article 31 rights<sup>13</sup>.

**(d) On-line safety:** Measures should be introduced to promote online access and accessibility, as well as safety for children, including action to empower and inform children to enable them to act safely online, to become confident and responsible citizens of digital environments, and to report abuse or inappropriate activity when it is encountered. Measures are also needed to: reduce impunity of abusive adults through legislation and international collaboration; limit access to harmful or adult-rated material and gaming networks; improve information for parents, teachers and policy makers to raise awareness

<sup>12</sup> ILO Night Work of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946 (No.79); ILO Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No.90); ILO *Minimum Age Convention*, 1973 (No. 138); ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention ( No.182)

<sup>13</sup> CRC General Comment No.13, The Right of the Child to Freedom from all Forms of Violence, CRC/C/GC/13, April 2011

of the potential harm associated with violent games; and develop strategies for promoting safer and attractive options for children.

(e) **Post conflict safety:** States should take active measures to restore and protect Article 31 rights in post conflict and disaster situations, including, inter alia:

- encouraging play and creative expression to promote resilience and psychological healing;
- creation or restoration of safe spaces, including schools, where children can participate in play and recreation as part of the normalisation of their lives;
- in areas where landmines pose a threat to the safety of children, investment must be made in ensuring the complete clearing of landmines and cluster-bombs from all affected areas<sup>14</sup>;

(f) **Marketing and media:** States should initiate action to:

- review policies concerning the marketing of toys and games to children, including through children's television programmes and directly related advertisements, with particular regard to those promoting violence, promoting girls or boys in a sexual way, and reinforcing gender and disability stereotypes;
- limit exposure to advertising during peak viewing hours for children;

(g) **Complaints:** Independent, effective, safe and accessible mechanisms must be in place for children to make complaints and seek redress if their Article 31 rights are violated.<sup>15</sup> Children need to be aware of both who they can complain to and the procedure for doing so. State are encouraged to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure (OPIC), which will allow individual children to submit complaints of violations.

58. The obligation to *fulfil* rights requires that States parties adopt a wide range of measures to ensure the fulfilment of all Article 31 rights. In accordance with Article 12, all such measures, both at national and local levels, and including planning, design, development, implementation and monitoring, should be developed in collaboration with children themselves, as well as NGOs and community-based organisations, through for example, children's clubs and associations, community arts and sports groups, representative organisations of children and adults with disabilities, representatives from minority communities, and play organisations<sup>16</sup>. In particular, consideration needs to be given to the following:

(a) **Legislation and planning:** The Committee strongly encourages States to consider the introduction of legislation to establish Article 31 rights for every child, together with a timetable for implementation. Such legislation should address the principle of sufficiency: that all children should be given sufficient time and space to exercise these rights. Consideration should also be given to the development of a dedicated plan, policy or framework for Article 31, or its incorporation into an overall national plan of action for implementation of the Convention. Such a plan needs to address the implications of Article 31 for boys and girls, all age groups, as well as children in marginalised groups and communities. It also needs to recognise that creating time and space for children's self-

<sup>14</sup> Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War (Protocol V to the 1980 Convention), 28 November 2003

<sup>15</sup> General Comment No. 2, The role of independent national human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, CRC/GC/2002/2, 15 November 2002

<sup>16</sup> CRC General Comment No.12, The Right of the Child to be heard, CRC/CGC/12, July 2009

directed activity is as important as the provision of facilities and opportunities for organised activities.

**(b) Data collection and research:** Indicators for compliance, as well as mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating implementation need to be developed in order to ensure accountability to children in the fulfilment of obligations under article 31. States need to collect population based data, disaggregated by age, sex, ethnicity and disability, to gain an understanding of the extent and nature of children's engagement in play, recreation and cultural and artistic life. Such information needs to inform any planning processes, and provide the basis for measuring progress in implementation. Research is also needed into the daily lives of children and their caregivers, and the impact of housing and neighbourhood conditions, in order to understand how they use local environments, the barriers they encounter in enjoying Article 31 rights, the approaches they adopt to surmount those barriers and the action needed to achieve greater realisation of those rights. Such research must actively involve children themselves, including children from the most marginalised communities.

**(c) Cross departmental collaboration in national and municipal government:** Planning for play, recreation, and cultural and artistic activities requires a broad and comprehensive approach involving cross-departmental collaboration, and accountability between national, regional and municipal authorities. Relevant departments include not only those dealing directly with children, such as health, education, social services, child protection, culture, recreation and sports, but also those concerned with water and sanitation, housing, parks, transport, environment and city planning, all of which impact significantly on the creation of environments in which children can realise their Article 31 rights.

**(d) Budgets:** Budgets should be reviewed to ensure that the allocation for children in respect of cultural, artistic, sporting, recreational and play activities is inclusive and consistent with their representation as a proportion of the population as a whole and distributed across provision for children of all ages, for example: budgetary support for the production and dissemination of children's books, magazines, and papers; various formal and non-formal artistic expressions for children; accessible equipment and buildings, and public spaces; resources for facilities such as sports clubs or youth centres. Consideration should be given to the cost of measures required to ensure access for the most marginalised children, including the obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure equality of access for children with disabilities.

**(e) Universal design<sup>17</sup>:** Investment in universal design is necessary with regard to play, recreational, cultural, arts and sports facilities, buildings, equipment and services, consistent with the obligations to promote inclusion and protect children with disabilities from discrimination. States should engage with non-state actors to ensure the implementation of universal design in the planning and production of all materials and venues, for example, accessible entrances to be used by wheelchair users and inclusive design for play environments including those in schools.

**(f) Municipal planning:** Local municipalities should assess provision of play and recreation facilities to guarantee equality of access by all groups of children, including through child impact assessments. Consistent with the obligations under Article 31 public planning must place a priority on the creation of environments which promote the well-

---

<sup>17</sup> The term "universal design" was coined by Ronald Mace to describe the concept of designing all products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability, or status in life; see also article 4(1)(f), General Obligations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

being of the child. In order to achieve the necessary child-friendly urban and rural environments, consideration should be given to, inter alia:

- Availability of inclusive parks, community centres, sports and playgrounds, safe and accessible to all children;
- Creation of a safe living environment for free play, including design of zones in which players, pedestrians and bikers have priority;
- Public safety measures to protect areas for play and recreation from individuals or groups who threaten children's safety;
- Provision of access to landscaped green areas, large open spaces and nature with safe, affordable and accessible transport, for play and recreation;
- Road traffic measures, including speed limits, levels of pollution, school crossings, traffic lights, and calming measures to ensure the rights of children to play safely within their local communities;
- Provision of clubs, sports facilities, organised games and activities for both girls and boys of all ages and from all communities;
- Dedicated and affordable cultural activities for children of all ages, and from all communities, including theatre, dance, music, art exhibitions, libraries, cinema. Such provision should comprise opportunities for children to produce and create their own cultural forms as well as exposing them to activities produced by adults for children;
- Review of all cultural policies, programmes and institutions, to ensure their accessibility and relevance for all children, and to ensure that they take into account the needs and aspirations of children, and support their emerging cultural practices.

(g) **Schools:** educational environments should play a major role in fulfilling the obligations under Article 31:

- *The physical environment of settings:* States parties should aim to ensure the provision of: adequate indoor and outdoor space to facilitate play, sports, games and drama during and around the school day; active promotion of equal opportunities for both girls and boys to play; adequate sanitation facilities; playgrounds, play landscapes and equipment that are safe, properly and regularly inspected; playgrounds with appropriate boundaries; equipment and spaces designed to enable all children to participate equally, including children with disabilities; play areas which afford opportunities for all forms of play; location and design of play areas, with adequate protection and involving children in the design and development.
- *The structure of the day:* Statutory provision should guarantee appropriate time throughout the day, including determining levels of proposed homework, to ensure that children have sufficient opportunity for both rest and play, in accordance with their age and developmental needs.
- *The curriculum of the school:* Consistent with obligations under Article 29, the aims of education, appropriate time and expertise must be allocated within the school curriculum for children to learn, participate in and generate

cultural and artistic activities, including music, drama, literature, poetry, and art, as well as sports and games<sup>18</sup>.

- **Educational pedagogy:** Learning environments should be active and participatory and offer, especially in the early years, playful activities and forms of engagement.

(h) **Training and capacity building:** All professionals working with or for children, or whose work impacts on children (government officials, educators, health professionals, social workers, early years and care workers, planners and architects, etc.), should receive systematic and on-going training on the human rights of children, including the rights embodied in Article 31. Such training should provide guidance on how to create and sustain environments in which Article 31 rights can be most effectively realised for all children.

59. **International cooperation:** The Committee encourages international cooperation in the realisation of Article 31 through the active engagement of United Nations agencies including UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCR, UN Habitat, UNOSDP, UNDP, UNEP and WHO, as well as international, national and local NGOs.

## IX. Dissemination

60. The Committee recommends that States parties disseminate the General Comment widely within government and administrative structures, to parents, other caregivers, children, professional organizations, communities and civil society at large. All channels of dissemination, including print media, the internet and children's own communication means, should be used. This will necessitate translating it into relevant languages, including sign languages, Braille and easy-to-read formats for children with disabilities. It also requires making culturally appropriate and child-friendly versions available.

61. States parties are also encouraged to report fully to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the measures they have adopted to encourage the full implementation of Article 31 for all children.

---

<sup>18</sup> CRC General Comment No.1, The aims of education, Article 29(1) CRC/C/2001/1