

CONFERENCE REPORT

10 years of OPIC Pathways of Access to Justice for Children

10th Anniversary Symposium on the
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the
Rights of the Child on a Communications
Procedure (OPIC)



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



for every child

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Leiden, The Netherlands



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In addition, the organizers express their great appreciation to all the speakers, moderators, and experts who have enriched this conference with their unique perspectives and profound insights into children's rights. Each of the contributors has brought a distinct expertise, greatly contributing to the depth of discussion and the quality of engagement throughout the event. The organizers are especially grateful to the many distinguished members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee) who not only participated but also played a crucial role in shaping the program and driving the conversation forward with their expert knowledge.

The organizers of the conference wish to extend their heartfelt thanks to all attendees who not only participated but also engaged actively in discussions and posed thoughtful questions to the experts. The attendees' enthusiasm and involvement have been instrumental in making this event a success and impactful.

Special thanks are extended to Rehana Dole, Ana Luísa Orlandi, Rick van Egmond and the Leiden Law Academy for their tremendous efforts in preparing for the conference. Their dedication and hard work were instrumental in ensuring the seamless execution of this event.

The collective efforts mentioned above have contributed to the success of this conference and have also advanced the conversation on children's rights worldwide, particularly their right to access justice. The organizers are hopeful that the conversation continues and will have a lasting, positive impact on the rights of all children, as members of the global community, which has human rights and fundamental freedoms as its foundation.

Disclaimer: The summaries provided and the views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author, and do not reflect the views of Leiden University, its partners, sponsors or the speakers, nor do they reflect the views of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, or any of its members.



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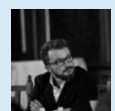
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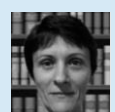
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SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

Day 1 – 10 April 2024

1. OPENING CEREMONY

TON LIEFAARD opened the conference by welcoming the distinguished guests, colleagues, friends, and students gathered at Leiden University to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure (OPIC). The event aimed to reflect on OPIC's decade of influence in granting international legal access to justice for children, evaluating the broader implications for children's rights and freedoms and the experiences over the years by assessing OPIC's case law and jurisprudence from its inception, drawing lessons from other international and regional forums that offer remedies for human rights violations affecting children.

ANN SKELTON joined in the welcoming remarks, emphasising the significance of the conference's timing as OPIC celebrates its tenth anniversary—an ideal moment for reflection. Over the past seven years, the CRC Committee has seen a substantial increase in its workload, escalating from just 4 decisions to 148. This remarkable growth highlights the development of its jurisprudence, illustrating the Committee's meticulous approach to setting legal precedents and exploring potential advancements in legal interpretations.

Despite the widespread ratification of the CRC by 196 states, only 52 have adopted OPIC, representing a notably small proportion. In this regard, Prof. Skelton highlighted how crucial the platform of the conference is to explore the underlying reasons for this disparity and discuss strategies to encourage broader ratification efforts. Additionally, Prof. Skelton addressed the procedural aspects of OPIC, which, despite some child-friendly procedural rules, may still appear daunting from an outsider's perspective. Innovations have been made, such as in a notable climate change case (*Sacchi v. Argentina*) where, for the first time, oral hearings were conducted publicly at the children's request, and an open letter to the children involved in the case, using child-friendly language to explain their decision was crafted.

Finally, Prof. Skelton underlined the Committee's commitment to ensuring that children have accessible pathways to realising their rights. This commitment is underscored by the Committee's focus on the upcoming General Comment No. 27 on children's rights to access justice and effective remedies.

ANNA BATALLA outlined that out of 148 decisions, the Committee has identified violations in 47 cases. Of the cases finding violations, 38 are under the follow-up procedure for the Committee to monitor state compliance with the recommendations. 9 cases have been concluded, most of them successfully. Additionally, the Committee has made 4 decisions where no violations were found, declared 37 cases inadmissible, and discontinued 60 cases (which often occurs when the issue is resolved through compliance with interim measures or other resolutions before a formal decision is made). There are 97 cases pending consideration, of which 36 are prepared and ready for review.

The distribution of cases involves only 19 of the 52 states that have ratified OPIC. Such limited engagement shows a potential lack of awareness about OPIC. This poses a significant challenge not only in encouraging more States to ratify this instrument but also in enhancing the dissemination of knowledge and building capacity within civil society.

Ms. Batalla reflected on OPIC's significant impact, emphasising the 80% compliance rate with the Committee's decisions. Additionally, the follow-up process has demonstrated positive changes in State behaviour, with most States fully complying with both individual and general reparations required by the Committee. Finally, interim measures have been effectively used to prevent irreparable harm, with States adhering to them.

BO VIKTOR NYLUND underlined UNICEF's ongoing commitment to promoting the CRC and its Optional Protocols, including OPIC, acknowledging the persistent need for increased ratification. Dr. Bo Viktor detailed UNICEF's efforts to raise awareness about children's rights globally, leveraging their extensive network in both high-income and low to middle-income countries.

Dr. Bo Viktor reflected on the right to access justice and remedies, noting that the right to remedies is often narrowly interpreted as relating only to legal cases involving children. However, Dr. Bo Viktor highlighted its broad scope beyond just judicial proceedings, advocating for a broader interpretation that encompasses not only the whole gamut of rights enshrined in the CRC but also all the topologies of ways of addressing the right to remedy for the child.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Bo Viktor highlighted UNICEF's active support for the Committee's upcoming General Comment No. 27 on children's rights to access justice and effective remedies as a practical tool that will contribute not only to governments but other stakeholders, including civil society organisations, academia, and UN agencies, in promoting and enforcing children's right to remedy within their respective domains.

2. KEYNOTE SESSION – TAKING STOCK OF 10 YEARS OF OPIC

Moderated by Ms. Karabo Ozah, the first session opened the substantive discussions by looking at the developments of OPIC during its ten years of existence. The key note speakers reflected on the progress of OPIC since it came into force, how the mechanism evolved, what these first decade of operations demonstrated with respect to OPIC's strengths and pitfalls, and which challenges can be identified.

BENOIT VAN KEIRSBILCK – OPIC TAKING STOCK OF THE LAST 10 YEARS, AN INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

Mr. van Keirsbilck provided a historical overview of OPIC, highlighting its development as a significant mechanism for redress. The long journey towards adopting OPIC took approximately 22 years after the CRC was adopted, which shows a general reluctance among states to commit to an international framework that might challenge their practices in implementing children's rights.

Mr. van Keirsbilck discussed the limited ratification of OPIC, noting that only 52 states have adopted it since it entered into force. The State's reluctance to provide children with powerful legal tools internationally, partly due to perceptions of their diminished capacity, arises as a possible reason for not ratifying the Protocol. Additionally, the State fears condemnation for past violations, although OPIC only addresses these situations exceptionally if there is an ongoing violation. Finally, some States may argue that their national courts sufficiently protect children's rights, negating the need for international oversight.

After explaining the procedure upon receiving a communication, Mr. van Keirsbilck provided insights into several impactful cases handled by the Committee. First, it's the repatriation of children from camps in Syria, which involved complex international legal challenges due to Syria's non-ratification of OPIC. These cases, against France and Finland, highlighted the responsibility of States beyond their borders. Another moving case involved a young girl in Peru who, as a victim of sexual abuse, sought access to abortion but faced significant barriers in accessing healthcare. The Committee's intervention via interim measures in one case led to a timely abortion, potentially saving the girl's life.

Finally, Mr. van Keirsbilck outlined key challenges and areas for improvement concerning OPIC, emphasising the need for child-friendly engagement with children, further dissemination of OPIC decisions, and jurisprudential coherence across various human rights bodies and conventions.

TON LIEFAARD – A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF 10 YEARS OF OPIC

Prof. Liefwaard discussed the barriers children usually face in accessing justice, which includes legal, practical, and social and cultural barriers, and reflected on some of the contributions made by the CRC Committee concerning OPIC. He highlighted the diversity of cases addressed since OPIC's entry into force, the impacts of the decisions (even beyond the Committee's jurisdiction), and the evolution of remedies (covering individual and systemic remedies).

To identify and prioritise future directions for strengthening OPIC's role in advancing children's rights, Prof. Liefwaard highlighted three key areas that could enhance OPIC's efficacy and normative legitimacy. First, 'democratic legitimacy': States should engage sufficiently and meaningfully with OPIC. In this regard, ongoing guidance and technical support for States should be offered during the ratification process and subsequent procedures. Additionally, maintaining rigorously developed legal decisions and fostering constructive expectations with States is essential to encourage continuous dialogue and engagement with OPIC. Secondly, 'procedural legitimacy': the procedures before the Committee should be accessible and tailored to meet children's needs. To achieve this, Prof. Liefwaard called for collective support to the Committee in enhancing its responsiveness, ensuring children's voices are heard in more cases, and preventing unnecessary delays. Thirdly, 'output legitimacy': OPIC's impact should be meticulously assessed. In this regard, the Committee's success in integrating individual and systemic remedies to effectively tackle child-specific issues, contributing to substantial changes in legal practices and legislative reforms, is highlighted.

Prof. Liefwaard also reflected on OPIC's role in enhancing domestic remedies for children's rights, suggesting that the Committee's commitment be explicitly reflected in the concluding observations section on access to justice, providing concrete suggestions on what is needed. Finally, Prof. Liefwaard emphasised the importance of collaboration among scholars, stakeholders, and the Committee to enhance the implementation of the following General Comment No. 27 on children's rights to access justice and effective remedies.

Q&A

During an engaging discussion, the audience asked the panel about the systemic impacts of the Committee's decisions, the role of systemic remedies in enhancing legal redress for children in countries with inadequate child protection systems, and strategic litigation in migration cases.

In terms of systemic impact, the panel reflected on the decision in the Spanish case, which significantly led to hundreds of children gaining access to education. In evaluating the decision's impact, the State initially receives the decision and must report back to the Committee after six months, which allows for ongoing evaluation. Additionally, States are reviewed periodically, providing opportunities to discuss legislative changes or new practices informed by field data.

Regarding migration-related cases, this may reflect the lack of child-sensitive responses in national immigration policies. To decide, the Committee aligns its responses with its General Comments, providing a predictable framework for addressing similar future cases. This approach has influenced legal strategies within countries like Spain, where concerted efforts have utilised OPIC to address systemic issues, demonstrating OPIC's capacity to drive significant legal and social changes.

Finally, the panel argued that OPIC's adoption might initially expose and challenge States that have not ratified OPIC by spotlighting existing weaknesses in their child protection systems. However, this could ultimately strengthen accountability and improve their systems. The panel also noted the broader implications of OPIC's rulings being recognised by regional and national courts, which could substantially increase OPIC's legal impact, enhancing domestic enforcement of children's rights.

3. PAPER PRESENTATIONS – ROUND I – INSIDE OPIC

Moderated by Helen Duffy, the panel reflected on four key aspects of OPIC: interim measures (Article 6), the admissibility requirements (Article 7), remedies, and the inquiry procedure (Articles 13 and 14).

MEDA COUZENS – ADMISSIBILITY

Dr. Couzens explored the admissibility criteria under OPIC (Article 7), expressing initial interest in how the Committee might interpret these provisions with a distinct child-centred approach. The Committee has successfully integrated some child-centred methods into their procedures, for instance, in the *Sacchi v. Argentina* case (also referred to as the climate change case), which illustrates the Committee's mixed approach: progressive regarding jurisdiction but conservative regarding the exhaustion of domestic remedies.

Regarding the inadmissibility due to abuse of the right to submission and claims' incompatibility with the provisions of the CRC [Article 7 (c) OPIC], Dr. Couzens reflected on cases deemed inadmissible because they pertain primarily to parents' rights, arguing that while technically parents do not hold rights under the CRC, they possess certain entitlements that merit careful consideration. In terms of inadmissibility due to the examination of matters by the Committee or other investigative or settlement bodies [Article 7(d) OPIC], Dr. Couzens highlighted the fact that the Committee has adopted a child-friendly perspective in applying this requirement, differentiating its approach from other bodies and recognising claims as admissible when previous domestic or international decisions have not adequately considered the interests of children separately from those of adults involved.

Finally, regarding the exhaustion of domestic remedies as an admissibility criterion [Article 7(e) OPIC], Dr. Couzens pointed out a significant challenge in the Committee's jurisprudence: most complaints are submitted by adults on behalf of children, a situation that can obscure the Committee's ability to fully appreciate children's procedural vulnerabilities, stressing the need to carefully apply this requirement to avoid disadvantaging children who, due to their limited capacity to access domestic remedies, might find themselves unfairly penalised for their parents' oversight in domestic litigation.

BRAGI GUDBRANDSSON – INTERIM MEASURES

Mr. Gudbrandsson highlighted the dual nature of interim measures (IM), serving both a protective function (intended to avoid irreparable harm and preserve the exercise of human rights) and a precautionary function (preserving a legal situation under consideration by the Committee, avoiding infringement of the rights at stake). To grant IM, the Committee determines the existence of "exceptional circumstances," i.e., the grave impact that an action or omission by a State Party can have on a protected right. Also, the Committee evaluates the potential for "irreparable damage," i.e., a violation of rights that, due to their nature, would not be susceptible to reparation, restoration, or adequate compensation. The risk or threat must be imminent; if not, the author may request the IM later when the risk becomes imminent. The threat of imminent irreparable damage needs not to be proven beyond doubt; instead, the information provided by the alleged victim(s) should enable the Committee to determine *prima facie* if an imminent risk of irreparable harm's grave impact on children's rights exists. Finally, States may present arguments against IM at any stage of the proceedings. However, if a State fails to implement the IM, the Committee considers this a violation of the State's obligations under the CRC.

After showing the audience examples of the diversity of IM (including age determination, deportation cases, schooling cases, and health cases), Mr. Gudbrandsson highlighted the benefits of IM, which, in various cases, have led to discontinuances of the cases since the State addresses the issue. The latent benefits of IM include contributing to the improved quality of decisions by States and facilitating the Committee's monitoring functions. Finally, a potential risk of instrumentalising the IM is discussed since parties might exploit them to expedite case registration.

VELINA TODOROVA – REMEDIES

Dr. Todorova started her presentation by stating the two aspects of remedies: the *procedural aspect*, which involves effective access to justice for children, and the *substantive aspect*, which relates to the outcomes or responses to recognised violations of children's rights. Dr. Todorova argued that remedies should respect children's rights individually and systematically and align with children's expectations.

Dr. Todorova then addressed the Committee's approach to remedies evolution. Initially, the focus was predominantly on identifying violations rather than specifying remedies. The recommendations were generally vague, often urging them to refrain from further violations and prevent similar incidents without detailed guidance on remedies. Significant shifts occurred after 2018 as the Committee began to enhance its focus on both individual and systemic remedies. Notable progress was made in addressing complex issues like age determination for unaccompanied minors. The Committee moved towards more specific recommendations, including requiring States to offer effective reparations for violations and to regularise the administrative status of affected children. Systemic remedies included the need to change structural policies and legislation, for instance, the elimination of invasive age-determination practices like genital examinations or the importance of training professionals involved, in children's rights.

Dr. Todorova concluded by highlighting the critical role of follow-up procedures in the context of remedies. This procedure is pivotal as it allows the Committee to engage directly with State Parties after issuing its views, fostering an ongoing dialogue that can influence and enhance the implementation of recommendations. This ongoing engagement often enables the Committee to work closely with and sometimes persuade State Parties to take necessary actions based on the Committee's findings and recommendations.

FERUZA ABDULLAeva BOCHATAY – INQUIRIES PROCEDURE

Ms. Abdullaeva started outlining that the Committee can conduct the inquiry procedure if reliable information is received indicating grave or systematic violations of the CRC or its substantive Optional Protocols by a State that has ratified these instruments and OPIC itself (Articles 13 and 14 of OPIC and the Rules of Procedure under OPIC). Notably, all states except Monaco, which opted out, accepted this procedure upon ratification. The procedures are conducted confidentially, and so far, one decision related to the Chile inquiry has been made public (2018).

Ms. Abdullaeva highlighted that the inquiry procedure does not require the exhaustion of domestic remedies. The Committee's inquiry working group assesses the credibility of the allegations, inviting the state involved to respond within two months. The Committee may seek additional information and consult with various entities like UN bodies, NGOs, and National Human Rights Institutions. Once the Committee secures sufficient information, the inquiry working group recommends whether to proceed. If approved, the Committee designates members to formally launch the inquiry, notify the State Party, and request a focal point and permission for a visit, during which confidential meetings with NGOs and victims are held. If a State Party delays or refuses a visit, the Committee may conduct the inquiry remotely, involving online consultations with relevant stakeholders. After these consultations, designated members draft a report that the Committee reviews and adopts. The report is then sent to the State Party, which has six months to make comments. After receiving the State Party's observations, the Committee publishes the report, and a follow-up process starts (through periodic reports or a separate mechanism).

Ms. Abdullaeva concluded by reflecting on the challenges faced by the Committee in handling the inquiry procedures, which include limited resources within the secretariat, insufficient allocated time for Committee meetings to discuss cases in depth, limited cooperation from State Parties, and a general lack of awareness about the procedure among children.

REFLECTIONS BY JAAP DOEK

Prof. Doek shared key reflections on the session, starting with the challenges of extraterritorial jurisdiction. Based on the cases discussed in the session about children in Syria, Prof. Doek argued that applying States' extraterritorial responsibility for their nationals is a good starting point. This approach is in line with the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, which encourages State Parties to adopt extraterritorial jurisdiction to prosecute perpetrators, thereby enhancing the protection of children's rights across borders.

Regarding the requirement of exhausting domestic remedies, Prof. Doek reflected on the notable climate change case (*Sacchi vs. Argentina*), which involved a complaint against Argentina by a Swedish individual and was declared inadmissible due to the failure to exhaust national remedies. Prof. Doek reflected on the practicality of requiring a non-citizen to exhaust remedies in a foreign jurisdiction, where they might not even be recognised as having legal standing, and the possibility for the Committee to reconsider the exceptions to this requirement, especially in cases where national remedies are not objectively effective.

Finally, Prof. Doek reflected on interim measures (IM) under OPIC and the legal basis for enforcing these measures as obligatory under Article 6 of OPIC since the language used in OPIC requests States to give "urgent consideration" to IM, which does not explicitly mandate compliance. This lack of clarity had led to complications in cases such as child abduction, where Ireland refused to implement an IM, citing compliance with its obligations under the Hague Convention. This underscores the importance of being careful in this regard.

Q&A

Participants shared insightful reflections on the discussions and asked relevant questions regarding the evolving capacities of children and how they are considered within the OPIC framework. The panel emphasised the significance of respecting the evolving capacities of children in handling communications under OPIC, which does not limit itself to specific rights within the CRC, reflecting the overarching principles of the CRC that accommodate a child's evolving capacities. For instance, the case of a father's complaint on behalf of his daughter was found inadmissible because he did not seek her consent or views, underscoring the Committee's commitment to ensuring children's participation.



SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

Day 2 – 11 April 2024

4. KEY NOTE PANEL – REFLECTIONS ON CHILDREN’S ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND OPIC – PANEL CONVERSATION ON THE CROSS POLLINATION OF JURISPRUDENCE ACROSS OTHER TREATY BODIES AT THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Moderated by Nicolás Espejo Yaksic, the session explored the exchange of jurisprudence between the CRC Committee and other treaty bodies, regional human rights mechanisms, and international organisations.

ROBERT NANIMA – PERSPECTIVE OF AFRICAN TREATY BODIES

From a regional perspective, Dr. Nanima reflected on the cross pollination between the CRC Committee and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). He addressed the critical provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), named the universally applied principles of non-discrimination (Art. 3), the child's best interests (Art. 4(1)), the right to life, survival and development (Art. 5), and consideration of the child's views (Art. 4(2), 7, 12(2), 31). Then, Dr. Nanima addressed the role of Article 46, Sources of Inspiration, which permits the incorporation of ideas from various sources and the inbuilt communications procedure outlined in Article 44 of the ACRWC.

Regarding the similarities between the CRC Committee and the ACERWC, both have a communications procedure that provides a child with a platform to present complaints; in both instances, communications can be brought on behalf of a child and are subject to admissibility criteria; both embrace submitting the communication within reasonable time and the exhaustion of available domestic remedies; the admissibility process is subject to similar criteria, and both Committees can issue provisional/interim measures. Concerning differences, whereas the CRC's communications procedure is embedded within OPIC, the communications procedure is inbuilt into the ACRWC. Regarding admissibility, the State must be a party under OPIC; conversely, communications may be brought before the ACERWC even if the State is not a party, provided it is in the child's best interest.

Dr. Nanima concluded by reflecting on potential avenues for further cross pollination, noting that most of the cross-pollination within ACERWC communications is based on substantive provisions, highlighting the importance of leveraging academic insights and increasing engagement with stakeholders to enrich the discourse around children’s rights protection and advocated for a more robust utilisation of the communications procedure to develop jurisprudence that effectively addresses children's rights issues.

CORINNE DETTMEIJER – REFLECTIONS FROM THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

Ms. Dettmeijer started her presentation by noting that the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW was implemented in December 2000, well ahead of OPIC, and has been ratified by 115 State Parties. Despite this, the CRC Committee is more visible than its CEDAW counterpart. In this regard, the CEDAW Committee has been proactive in ensuring that decisions and views are effectively disseminated and advocated across the countries involved, as enhancing visibility is essential for instigating tangible change at the grassroots level.

Regarding admissibility decisions, Ms. Dettmeijer clarified that these are among the most complex to assess due to their apparent simplicity and the profound nature of the cases. The process demands meticulous scrutiny of the narratives presented, and although the Committee is not a court, decisions should reflect the seriousness and precision of judicial rulings. Ms. Dettmeijer elaborated on two compelling cases faced in recent years by the CEDAW Committee, which tested the boundaries of admissibility, named *Matson vs. Canada* (involving historical discrimination claims under Canada's Indian Act) and *Malaya Lolos vs. the Philippines* (concerning discrimination

against survivors of wartime sexual violence). These cases presented significant challenges yet remained within justifiable legal frameworks and were declared admissible.

Ms. Dettmeijer further clarified the role of the CRC and CEDAW Committees in handling asylum cases, emphasising that their primary focus is on determining violations of children's or women's rights, not acting as a third instance of appeal. Although this strict focus can pose challenges and might warrant further scrutiny, this approach ensures that decisions are strictly based on evidence, regardless of the severity of the claimants' conditions. Finally, Ms. Dettmeijer reflected on the formulation of the CEDAW Committee's recommendations, which can sometimes be too broad.

MIKIKO OTANI – COMPARATIVE ACROSS OTHER UN TREATY BODIES

Dr. Otani started arguing that, in terms of exhaustion of domestic remedies, there is no uniform timeframe that UN treaty bodies use to determine when a remedy is unreasonably prolonged. Regarding the effectiveness and availability of domestic remedies as key considerations in the admissibility of cases, the focus is often on whether remedies are effective, yet availability is equally crucial. While remedies might be available in general for adults, they may not be realistically accessible for children, therefore a child rights-focused perspective into admissibility considerations may be incorporated. Dr. Otani emphasised the need for the CRC Committee to enhance its approach to remedies by learning from the jurisprudence of other UN treaty bodies and human rights courts. Good practices from the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (in terms of effective administrative and judicial remedies in social security disputes) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (which introduced the concept of "life plan") can serve as guides.

Finally, Dr. Otani emphasised the significant step towards empowering children by adopting OPIC. Although the CRC does not explicitly mention the right to remedies, the CRC Committee has clarified in its General Comment No. 5 that the right to effective remedies must be available to redress violations and that this requirement is implicit in the CRC. Additionally, children must be informed about their rights under other international instruments like the Optional Protocols to CEDAW, ICCPR, and CRPD, where applicable, even if their countries have not ratified OPIC.

LAURA MARTINEZ-MORA – CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF OPIC ON HCCH CHILDREN'S CONVENTIONS

Ms. Martinez-Mora highlighted the significant impact of key HCCH conventions, including the 1980 Child Abduction Convention, the 1993 Adoption Convention, the 1996 Child Protection Convention, and the 2007 Child Support Convention, emphasising how the CRC Committee's recommendations have encouraged States to become a party and effectively implement these conventions. This cooperation has substantially benefited children's rights. Indeed, these HCCH Conventions aim to implement various rights enshrined in the CRC effectively. For instance, while Article 21 of the CRC sets standards on adoption, the 1993 Adoption Convention delves much deeper, establishing detailed procedures and embracing the principle of subsidiarity in intercountry adoptions. Similarly, the 1980 Child Abduction Convention addresses issues outlined in Article 11 of the CRC, particularly the importance of combating the illicit transfer and ensuring the return of children.

Ms. Martinez-Mora emphasised the need for international collaboration, given the HCCH's nature as a legislative rather than an enforcement body. Conventions' application primarily rests with domestic authorities responsible for ensuring compliance with established rights.

Reflecting on a case of international child abduction involving Chile and Spain, in which the CRC Committee later issued a decision, Ms. Martinez-Mora emphasised the importance of collaboration between private international law and human rights bodies, and mentioned that the CRC Committee recognised that the objectives of the 1980 Child Abduction Convention – prevention and immediate return – seek to protect the best interests of the child.

The CRC Committee also noted that the 1980 Convention establishes a strong presumption that the best interests of the child require that he or she be immediately returned, but this presumption can be rebutted by the exceptions established in articles 12, 13 and 20 of the 1980 Convention, which should be interpreted strictly.

Q&A

Attendees posed critical questions reflecting concerns about justice for children under challenging circumstances, for instance, in the Netherlands, where many families faced discrimination without adequate legal recourse and the severe consequences for children unjustly separated from their parents from being labelled as fraudsters, questioning the effectiveness of other treaty bodies in such domestic matters. A question was asked about collaboration between the HCCH and the CEDAW Committee to address domestic violence and improve protections for mothers and children escaping abusive situations.

The panel reflected that while individual communications might address specific cases, the broader systemic issues could potentially be subject to an inquiry procedure, emphasising the importance of engaging with international bodies like the CEDAW Committee to provide external oversight and perspectives.

Additionally, the panel emphasised that the Human Rights Council, the UN General Assembly, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the CRC Committee have dealt with the issue of legal assistance. In this regard, the drafting of the new General Comment No. 27, which focuses on the rights of children to access justice and effective remedies, would provide an excellent opportunity to examine and address the specific issue of legal aid and financial burdens.

Finally, the African perspective, where the duality of formal and informal justice systems coexists, offers a good opportunity to rethink broadening the definition and acceptance of what constitutes exhaustion of local remedies.

5. PAPER PRESENTATIONS – ROUND II – STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Moderated by Dr. Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi, the session provided a platform for reflection by 'external agents' engaged with OPIC, offering a space for various stakeholders to critically analyse their roles and the challenges they encounter in promoting and implementing this relatively new instrument. Additionally, the session aimed to broaden the audience's understanding of how different participants experience their involvement with OPIC.

BRUCE ADAMSON – ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS (ICRIs)

Prof. Adamson addressed the role of ICRIs in facilitating access to justice, emphasising the bridge they provide between international human rights frameworks and domestic realisation of rights. Prof. Adamson discussed the historical context and evolution of the ICRIs and the importance of focusing solely on children's rights (in contrast to National Human Rights Institutions,) adhering to even higher standards set out in General Comment No. 2 by the CRC Committee. ICRIs not only bridge international and national rights realisation but also hold a specific obligation to collaborate with the international community and ensure sufficient state funding.

Prof. Adamson highlighted the significance of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) as an example of the shared experience crucial for enhancing access to justice. He also referenced specific national efforts in countries like Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa and regional activities in the Americas and Asia, where significant strides have been made in advancing the agenda of ICRIs.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Adamson argued that developing child-friendly complaint mechanisms that are accessible without the need for legal representation and tailored to the needs of children and young people is crucial. Finally, Mr. Adamson highlighted the role of ICRIs in lobbying for the ratification of international instruments like OPIC and their critical role in focusing on domestic remedies when international ratification is not feasible.

ALEX CONTE – ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Dr. Conte elaborated on civil society's significant role in enhancing access to justice for children through OPIC. He emphasised two main levels of civil society's involvement: increasing ratification of OPIC and enhancing its effective use. First, for OPIC to serve as a viable justice pathway for child victims of human rights violations, ratification by States is imperative. This is because the CRC Committee can only receive complaints or requests for inquiries from children within jurisdictions of States that have ratified OPIC. Despite a decade since its inception, only just over 25% of State Parties to the CRC have ratified OPIC, leaving a significant gap in access to this mechanism for most children. The role of civil society in this regard encompasses campaigning and demystifying OPIC, helping other states to understand that OPIC is a constructive instrument that can enhance national legal systems and uphold children's rights. This involves breaking down misconceptions and illustrating the benefits experienced by States that have implemented it.

The second level of civil society involvement focuses on making OPIC not only an available pathway but also an effective one. This includes raising awareness among children and their advocates about their rights to seek remedies through OPIC, enhancing knowledge and skills on using OPIC effectively, and providing support for cases, possibly through amicus briefs. Additionally, civil society should advocate for national remedies to be effective, accessible, and child-friendly, ensuring that OPIC remains a last resort when domestic avenues fail.

EDUARDO REZENDE MELO – ROLE OF THE JUDICIARY

Judge Rezende Melo discussed the issue of recognising procedural subjectivity for children, noting that many countries still do not recognise children's ability to bring their cases to justice despite international documents granting this. Research indicated that only 58% of countries recognise this procedural subjectivity, underscoring a cultural shift needed in the global legal framework. Challenges are extending beyond general child-related legal fields. While family courts and juvenile justice systems commonly handle child matters, other areas like housing and rental disputes also significantly impact children's rights and require a broader application of child-focused jurisprudence. This highlights the importance that, for genuinely child-focused justice, judicial systems should recognise and incorporate children's perspectives in all cases, even those not directly involving them.

Judge Rezende Melo addressed the role of cultural diversity and the principle of the best interests of the child within the judiciary, advocating for increased training and awareness among judges to foster environments sensitive to diverse social and historical backgrounds. Moreover, Judge Rezende Melo addressed the challenge of structural situations, recalling that individual complaints are, in various cases, related to inequality and social injustice. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' approach of including general recommendations for non-repetition in their decisions was highlighted as a method to encourage States to prevent future violations.

In his concluding remarks, Judge Rezende Melo advocated for innovative approaches to conflict resolution and justice processes, highlighting the potential for new procedural models that challenge traditional perceptions of the justice system. The justice system should not be seen as a static and rigid structure but as a dynamic and creative arena capable of evolving. Finally, a closer relationship between judicial systems and UN bodies, especially, but not exclusively, the CRC Committee, is underscored.

JASPER KROMMENDIJK – GOVERNMENT FROM A DUTCH RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

Drawing from his PhD dissertation on the impact and effectiveness of state reporting mechanisms under six different UN human rights treaties, Dr. Krommendijk outlined the challenges posed by the often general and vague nature of treaty body recommendations. He noted that most Concluding Observations remain ineffective, either because States claim compliance without taking substantial action, since the recommendations are vague or unspecific, or because they outright reject concrete recommendations citing non-compliance.

Dr. Krommendijk highlighted a significant finding related to the relative effectiveness of CRC recommendations compared to other treaties. However, he noted that these recommendations were not the sole impetus for government actions and changes in practice; instead, they were one of multiple influencing factors. For instance, in countries like the Netherlands and Finland, the influence of CRC recommendations is enhanced by judicial decisions from Strasbourg (the European Court of Human Rights). Dr. Krommendijk also highlighted that the effectiveness of these recommendations is multifaceted, influencing not only policy and legislative changes but also raising issues on the public agenda and leading to the commissioning of studies.

Ultimately, Dr. Krommendijk emphasised the crucial role of domestic mobilisation by Civil Society Organizations and the need for adequate government resources, mechanisms, and interdepartmental collaboration to effectively translate international recommendations into domestic practices.

REFLECTIONS BY ALANA ORGANIZATION

Ms. Letícia Carvalho, international advisor at Alana Institute, reflected on the challenges of ensuring timely domestic remedies, highlighting the detrimental delays often experienced, particularly in cases of collective nature like climate and environmental justice. These cases commonly involve organisations acting on behalf of those affected, especially children, who lack the legal capacity to initiate claims independently. She emphasised the need to consider such cases' admissibility at the CRC Committee.

Ms. Carvalho stressed the importance of considering the impact of the private sector on children's rights, as highlighted in General Comment No. 16. Acknowledging that the private sector can be a violator of children's rights, the reflection focused on the necessity for States to strengthen mechanisms for accountability and prevention of abuses within this sector and the potential role of international bodies, like the CRC Committee, in actively engaging with the private sector to promote compliance with children's rights standards.

Finally, Carvalho underscored the collective responsibility in enhancing the dissemination and understanding of OPIC, emphasising the importance of integrating insights from the upcoming General Comment No. 27 and the need for judicial systems to be engaged from the drafting stages.

Q&A

The audience raised questions about the roles of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), particularly regarding their ability to handle individual complaints from children, pointing out the lack of adoption of this practice, for instance, in Norway, and suggesting the exploration of alternative ways to empower these institutions to domestically enhance children's access to justice.

The panel reflected on the challenging role that NHRIs play in advocating for adequate resources and powers from governments in order to be as effective as possible and the importance of complaint mechanisms as a way for children to access justice, emphasising the need for NHRIs to balance strategic impact with handling individual complaints.

The panel also reflected on the comments of Alana Organization, highlighting the challenges in climate change litigation cases, especially the delays caused by corporate legal strategies that hinder timely justice for affected parties, highlighting the positive role of active litigants and pro bono lawyers who are crucial in combating these barriers and advancing.

6. INTERACTIVE SESSION – BUILDING CHILD CENTRED PATHWAYS TO OPIC

The panel, chaired by Francisco Vera and composed of Cédric Foussard, Angela Vigil, and Bruce Adamson, discussed the systemic participation of children in the justice system. The session aimed to emphasise the importance of child-friendly communication and the complexities of legal advocacy for children by engaging with the audience in a role-playing activity.

CÉDRIC FOUSSARD opened the session by emphasising the significant progress made since the adoption of the CRC, particularly in ensuring that children have a stronger representation and a more significant say in judicial decisions that affect them. Mr. Foussard posed a fundamental question to the audience: Why should we listen to justice users in general and children in particular? He first highlighted 'fairness,' underscoring that involving children in the justice system promotes not only respect for their rights but also enhances perceptions of fairness and inclusivity, ultimately building trust in public institutions. Furthermore, focused on improving the child justice system itself, children who are in contact with the law experience it firsthand; their perspectives are crucial for shaping laws, policies, and justice services.

The discussion then moved towards systemic child participation in justice, questioning the adaptability of the current justice systems to children's evolving maturity. Is the OPIC mechanism adapted to children? Is it really feasible for a child to exhaust all national remedies? What about marginalised children or children with learning or speech difficulties? The presentation concluded with a call for well-trained lawyers and advocates to better represent and support children in the justice system, inviting attendees to consider the perspective of both a child and a lawyer in understanding and navigating these challenges.

ANGELA VIGIL invited the audience to engage in a role-playing activity to simulate the dynamics between a young person and a legal advocate. Participants were paired, with one person assuming the role of a lawyer or advocate and the other embodying a 13-year-old child. The exercise explored effective communication and procedural dynamics in hypothetical legal settings. The session's facilitators moved among the participants to gather insights, aiming to use these observations to enrich the subsequent discussion. The activity concluded with a feedback session where participants shared their experiences and reflections, particularly focusing on the interactions that helped the 'children' understand the advocate's role and intentions. Reflections from those playing children highlighted the importance of advocates responding in a child-friendly and understanding manner, emphasising the need for honest communication about the realities of legal challenges. 'Advocates' noted the difficulty of maintaining engagement without being dismissive or overly simplistic and stressed the importance of clearly explaining legal concepts like confidentiality. The exercise underscored the delicate balance required in legal advocacy for children, involving both a strategic approach and a deeply personal engagement to respect and empower young clients as self-determining, rights-bearing individuals.

FRANCISCO VERA directed the discussion by emphasising the importance of enhancing empathy and humanity when dealing with children within the justice system. Highlighting the need to consider the impact of legal decisions on those affected, especially children, the discussion pointed to the ongoing issue of adult-centric perspectives dominating the justice system. This often leads to policies and practices that do not fully account for children's unique needs and circumstances, such as the problem of revictimization, where children feel re-victimized by the very systems meant to protect them. Francisco Vera shared personal experiences as an environmental activist, underlining the challenges faced when young activists are threatened or persecuted. These incidents reveal significant gaps in the justice system's ability to protect children, particularly on platforms like social media, where there is a lack of clear legal frameworks.

The audience engaged in a dynamic dialogue that underscored the urgent need for international action to protect children's rights, emphasising the importance of documenting violations for future accountability. The discussions also touched on the dual nature of social media as both a potential threat and a powerful tool for empowerment, highlighting the capacity of children to influence global awareness of their situations.

The discussion then addressed the challenges of accessing justice for children, highlighting issues like impunity and corruption that hinder progress. A broader inquiry about what can be done in cases where children have no viable options to pursue justice was raised, stressing that such scenarios are more common than perceived and require serious consideration within both national and international frameworks.

Diverse perspectives from the audience were shared, such as the innovative advocacy efforts in South Africa, where litigation and public protests have been used to address inadequate school conditions, demonstrating that justice can be pursued through multiple avenues beyond traditional litigation. Additionally, the importance of civil society and National Human Rights Institutions in overcoming obstacles like corruption that hinder access to justice was highlighted.

7. PAPER PRESENTATIONS – ROUND III – OVERCOMING CHALLENGES OPIC AND BROADER A2J AGENDA AT THE DOMESTIC LEVEL

Moderated by Prof. Ursula Kilkelly, the session critically explored the impacts of OPIC within the national sphere. Beyond the reflections on OPIC at the international level, the session reflected on how to use the Optional Protocol to advance access to justice for children at the domestic level.

URSULA KILKELLY highlighted ongoing challenges and advancements in child justice, underscoring the critical lack of momentum in the ratification of OPIC, noting a stagnation with only six ratifications since 2020, and stressing the need for enhanced global commitment to realise OPIC's full potential. Additionally, Prof. Kilkelly pointed to a significant gap in resources necessary for effective implementation and the absence of child-friendly procedures within the system. She emphasised the importance of integrating children's rights into broader human rights agendas and ensuring that domestic justice systems are adequately equipped to handle children's cases as a fundamental precursor to accessing international mechanisms like OPIC. Before giving the floor to the panellists, Prof. Kilkelly emphasized the importance of succession planning to ensure the CRC Committee retains the expertise and brilliance of its members over time.

BO VIKTOR NYLUND – REINFORCING DOMESTIC A2J

In discussing the holistic approach to access to justice, Mr. Nylund argued that happiness and justice are influenced not just by judicial processes but by a combination of factors, including, among others, social services availability, healthy life expectancy, and perceptions of corruption. Highlighting Finland as an example, where corruption is exceptionally low, he illustrated how these elements collectively contribute to a child's happiness and provide the comprehensive support necessary for healthy development.

Mr. Nylund recounted his experiences working in Sri Lanka, highlighting the complex challenges faced when the tsunami resulted in significant disruptions for children, many of whom lost their parents. The response involved navigating barriers posed by well-intentioned but inexperienced international aid organisation, which proposed evacuating children to the West. Instead, local authorities, with presidential support, opted to keep children within the country, leading to the establishment of a national system to manage the crisis, which included registering displaced children, reconnecting them with family where possible, and enhancing local judicial and social services infrastructure. Additionally, Mr. Nylund shared insights from his experience in Syria, highlighting the challenges of improving education in conflict zones, including efforts to support the education system despite the barriers posed by corruption and government atrocities. The focus was on scaling educational support by training teachers and developing a child-friendly curriculum.

Finally, Mr. Nylund emphasised the need for collaborative actions to enhance children's legal empowerment and the importance of civil society organisations in advocating for children's rights at the domestic level. He reflected on the potential of amicus briefs in addressing various issues affecting children, the use of child-friendly materials, and the integration of new technologies as innovative tools to aid in legal advocacy and education.

DELPHINE RODRIK AND HANAA HAKIKI – STRATEGIC LITIGATION

Ms. Rodrik and Ms. Hakiki began by clarifying that strategic litigation is the use of legal tools to support social justice efforts with other actors. Their work focuses on challenging pushbacks at the EU's external borders—actions that forcibly return individuals without due process, bypassing legal safeguards. Specifically, unaccompanied adolescent males among migrants and refugees arriving in Europe is a group often overlooked and subjected to heightened risk of human rights violations due to their age and appearance. Children may choose not to express their minor age before authorities for fear that identification as a child may separate them from their traveling groups or keep them trapped precisely in the types of situations that they're trying to escape. Access to justice for violations discussed is severely hindered at the national level, often due to the absence of identity documents that could verify the identity or age of individuals, particularly in refugee cases.

OPIC and other individual communications procedures emerge as a vital resource for children who have faced rights violations across various countries and over extended periods. Ms. Rodrik and Ms. Hakiki addressed the case of *D.D. v. Spain*, a communication brought before the CRC Committee regarding a 15-year-old deported from Melilla to Morocco without due process in December 2014. The inadequate handling by the Spanish authorities, who failed to recognise or accommodate D.D.'s minor status and language needs, illustrates the neglect often faced by minors in deportation scenarios. The case approach was aimed not only at challenging discriminatory narratives but also at addressing broader systemic issues affecting entire communities, not just children. Ms. Rodrik and Ms. Hakiki highlighted that to formulate the arguments for the case, given the lack of existing jurisprudence, they relied on the CRC's general comments, emphasising strategic litigation's intricate and resource-intensive nature. This case had a notable impact, influencing later CRC cases in Spain, and despite initial non-compliance, it contributed to significant legal reforms and improved practices regarding treating unaccompanied minors in expulsion scenarios.

NICOLAS ESPEJO YAKSIC – CRITICAL REFLECTIONS FROM A DOMESTIC CONSTITUTIONAL LAW PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Espejo Yaksic argued that access to justice should aim not only to remedy individual wrongs but also to transform the societal conditions that perpetuate inequality and violence within public and private institutions. This involves using the law to establish substantive equality for children when primary protections fail. The idea of transformative access to justice is based on what is called, in the Latin American context, transformative constitutionalism, an approach that views constitutional practice as inherently responsive to the region's context and realities.

Dr. Espejo Yaksic addressed the integration of domestic and international laws through the "block of constitutionality," a framework that unifies all legal sources—whether they be international human rights law, the constitution, or other national laws—into a cohesive legal structure aimed at the full protection of human rights. In this context, constitutionalism should be transformative, interpreting laws not just to assert their contents but to create tangible impacts on people's lives, especially children's, by ensuring effective remedies for rights violations.

In discussing the challenges of implementing a transformative approach to access to justice in Latin America, Dr. Espejo Yaksic highlighted the pervasive structural injustices that require justice systems to provide individual and systemic remedies. Moreover, the impact of these efforts must be assessed based on their effectiveness rather than merely their compliance with judgments. Regarding the specific challenges related to children's rights in Latin America, he stressed the need to break down legal barriers that hinder children's legal capacity and autonomy. The scarcity of research into children's perceptions of their interactions with courts points to a significant gap in procedural justice that requires greater attention. Lastly, Dr. Espejo Yaksic underlined the urgent need for a unified strategy in child rights litigation, which calls for a strategic approach to litigation and promoting a child rights-based perspective in legal practices.

ANNA NYLUND AND INGUN FORNES – PERSPECTIVES FOR PROSPECTIVE SIGNATORIES (NORWAY)

Prof. Nylund and Dr. Fornes presented arguments for and against OPIC's ratification, highlighting Norway's perception of itself as a child-friendly society with a robust history of protecting children's rights. Norway incorporated the CRC into national law, elevating children's rights under its legal framework. Critics of OPIC ratification argue that Norway's existing legal protections are sufficient, fearing that OPIC might restrict national legislative flexibility, especially in areas like migration and child protection. Concerns were also voiced about potential economic, social, and cultural rights issues under OPIC due to the risk of non-compliance and the vagueness of some rights, which could lead to a wide margin of appreciation unless there's a clear violation. Despite these challenges, Prof. Nylund and Dr. Fornes suggested that ratification could enhance Norway's ability to address some blind spots in children's rights protection, both domestically and internationally, encouraging a more robust engagement with international legal standards and practices.

Regarding the potential impact of OPIC on Norwegian law, Prof. Nylund and Dr. Fornes focused particularly on children's rights within immigration law. Analysis suggests that OPIC could lead to enhanced discussions within the government regarding the specific impacts of expulsion or entry bans on children, ensuring that children's interests are a primary consideration. Additionally, OPIC's influence could significantly improve children's access to justice in Norway, addressing challenges highlighted by research that shows that children in Norway often struggle to vindicate their rights due to the complexity and cost of administrative and legal processes. They typically rely heavily on their parents to engage in legal support. While ratification might not directly overhaul national recourse mechanisms, it could incentivise the government to enhance legal access and possibly empower the Norwegian Children's Ombudsperson by aligning with international recommendations, similar to adjustments seen in other countries. Despite the resistance to ratifying OPIC, Prof. Nylund and Dr. Fornes argued that the benefits of ratification are substantial and outweigh any drawbacks, advocating strongly for embracing OPIC to fulfil commitments to children's rights more fully.

REFLECTIONS PROVIDED BY MANFRED NOWAK

Prof. Nowak reflected on the types of cases brought before the CRC Committee, most of which tend to be migration-related cases. He noted that the Committee is viewed favourably in relation to how it decides on these cases compared to the European Court of Human Rights. Furthermore, he stressed the need to broaden the scope to address other significant issues, reflecting on the conference discussions to emphasise a diverse approach to addressing children's rights violations globally.

Prof. Nowak also reflected on the difficulties related to the exhaustion of domestic remedies, suggesting the possibility of expanding exceptions to this general rule, particularly in cases where children face genuine challenges in access to justice at the domestic level. Prof. Nowak highlighted Article 2 of OPIC, which emphasises the importance of considering the rights and views of children and giving appropriate weight to their age and maturity, suggesting that this could be better integrated with the rules on the exhaustion of domestic remedies in order to provide children with more effective access to international remedies. In the same line, he highlighted the preamble of OPIC, which recognises the unique obstacles that children face in seeking remedies for violations of their rights, arguing that this acknowledgment supports the need for more nuanced approaches to the exhaustion requirement.

8. CLOSING CONVERSATION – REFLECTIONS FROM THE UN, CRC COMMITTEE AND ACADEMIA – OPIC AND THE BROADER ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AGENDA

Ton Liefwaard, Ann Skelton, Benoit Van Keirsbilk, Anna Batalla, and Bo Viktor Nylund discussed the pivotal insights gathered from the two days of discussions, assessing the forward-looking steps towards the effective and widespread use of OPIC worldwide, as well as the development of a comprehensive research agenda to further explore and support OPIC and its meaning for children's access to justice globally.

The panel reflected on the practical implications of enhancing children's access to justice through OPIC and why taking accountability seriously is relevant, particularly concerning the rights and needs of children who require justice. The critical role of collective efforts in making OPIC effective was highlighted, especially given the Committee's physical distance from on-ground realities where children's rights issues unfold.

Regarding the CRC Committee's work dealing with OPIC cases, the panel acknowledged the critical feedback as beneficial yet felt reassured by the positive response. This optimism suggests that the Committee's efforts are generally on the right track despite acknowledged areas for improvement. The panel looked with excitement at the strategic litigation prospects that the conference might inspire, anticipating a variety of challenging new cases as well as imminent OPIC ratifications by some States. They also expressed optimism about the potential for collaborative progress, highlighting the synergy between grassroots actions and high-level advocacy, which can enhance OPIC's child-friendliness and ensure comprehensive accountability of States in realising children's rights. The panel highlighted the progress achieved over the past decade since OPIC entered into force and the importance of partnerships with civil society at the national level to enhance the accessibility of the Optional Protocol, acknowledging the challenge of making it more child-friendly/-sensitive. In this regard, partnerships with children and young people are crucial. In this context, the panel reflected on one tangible outcome relating to the involvement of students from the Advanced Master's in International Children's Rights program (Leiden University) who, based on methodologies developed by Child Rights Connect and Leiden University, created innovative and creative child-friendly summaries of OPIC decisions. The summaries are set to be published in the Children's Rights Observatory, with the CRC Committee planning to refer to this resource, making it accessible for children.

Finally, the panel underlined the importance expanding the academic work to support various stakeholders, including the CRC Committee, civil society actors, and children themselves in legal challenges and case preparation, contributing meaningfully to children's rights and children's access to justice.



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