

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Canada played an instrumental role in drafting and promoting the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The Convention outlines the responsibilities governments have to ensure a child's right to survival, healthy development, protection and participation in all matters that affect them. The four general principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child.

The UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on November 20, 1989. As of December 2008, the Convention had been ratified by 193 States, making it the most widely ratified human rights treaty.

Canada ratified the Convention in 1991. The Public Health Agency of Canada is responsible for coordination of federal implementation of the Convention in Canada. The Department of Justice is responsible for its legislative implementation at the federal level.

There are two Optional Protocols to the Convention that provide additional protection in two specific areas. Canada ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2000, and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2005.

Canada has taken a range of actions that promote the guiding principles of the Convention and its Optional Protocols, implementing policies, legislation and programs that yield positive outcomes for children. Central to this is the National Plan of Action for children, *A Canada Fit for Children*, which was launched in 2004.

In May 2002, the UN hosted a Special Session on Children to review international progress on children's rights, and identify priority actions for children. At its conclusion, the declaration and plan of action, *A World Fit for Children*, was unanimously adopted by the international community to reflect a renewed commitment to children.

Developed in response to *A World Fit for Children*, *A Canada Fit for Children* outlines goals, strategies, and opportunities for action on key priorities within four central themes: supporting families and strengthening communities; promoting healthy lives; protecting from harm; and promoting education and learning.

As a state party to the Convention, Canada is required to report periodically on measures it is taking to ensure continued compliance with the Convention and its Optional Protocols and has regularly done so since its first report in 1994. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child reviews these reports and issues "Concluding Observations" which may note accomplishments and recommend areas for improvement.

Additional information on the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* can be found at the following link: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/>

