

Media Statement

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Special protection measures needed for Haiti's children - Committee on the Rights of the Child

GENEVA – The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child said Monday it is deeply concerned about the devastating effects on children of the earthquake that struck Haiti last week, and urged “all those involved in the relief effort to pay particular attention to the heightened vulnerability of children who survived the disaster, and will inevitably face many additional hazards in its aftermath.”

“Children are always deeply affected by major disasters of this type, and almost half of the Haitian population are children,” the Committee said, expressing its heartfelt sympathy to the children and their families.

While encouraged by the initial reaction of the international community to assist Haiti in the aftermath of this catastrophe, the Committee called upon “all those involved to pay special attention to children in their relief as well as reconstruction efforts.”

An unknown number of children have been injured and are in urgent need of medical care, the Committee said, adding that “access to clean water and sanitation is vital to avoid the spread of communicable diseases, which can be particularly dangerous to children. The special needs and rights of children should be also taken into account during food distribution, to ensure that the food reaches those most in need, and not just those who are best placed to receive it – who are usually adults.”

The Committee, which is currently in session in Geneva, said it is “alarmed by emerging reports of looting and violence, which highlight the importance of immediately adopting effective systems and measures to protect children from all forms of violence and exploitation, including sexual abuse and abductions masquerading as adoptions.”

Of particular concern are the thousands of children who are separated from their families, the Committee said. “It is imperative they are identified as soon as possible and provided with care and protection both to avoid further trauma and to minimize violations of their rights.”

The Committee stressed the importance of efforts aimed at enabling children to regain a semblance of normality and stability, including the resumption of education, as soon as possible.

The 18-member Committee on the Rights of the Child is the body monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by 193 states.

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Learn more about the Committee on the Rights of the Child:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/crcs53.htm>

OHCHR Country Page – Haiti: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/LACRegion/Pages/HTIndex.aspx>