



Children's Rights Alliance
for England



Children
England
Charities working for
children and Families



Lord McNally
Minister of State
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ

Children's Rights Alliance for England
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London
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19 July 2012

Dear Lord McNally,

We are writing as representatives of organisations that work to promote children's rights in the UK, to urge the Government to ratify the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in line with Slovakia's recent UPR recommendation.

We warmly welcomed the Government's commitment to consider the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in the development of new laws and policy. We believe that the ratification of the Optional Protocol – resulting in an independent and expert body able to examine Government's compliance with children's rights – would demonstrate this commitment in practice.

Ratification of this instrument would allow children who consider their rights to have been breached to ask the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) to examine their case and act as safety net for those children who are unable to access their rights in the domestic courts. Given that many of the provisions in the CRC are yet to be incorporated into the UK's human rights framework and that children therefore lack a clear right of redress in the domestic courts, the Committee's oversight is crucial to ensure access to justice for children.

As you will know, children are particularly vulnerable to violations of their rights, they often are not listened to when they raise concerns, and they are unable to use the democratic process to seek change where their rights are at risk. This means that children are more reliant than others upon complaints mechanisms and quasi-judicial bodies to protect their rights. As the Committee is the international body charged with interpreting the requirements of CRC, children must have access to it where their rights may have been breached.

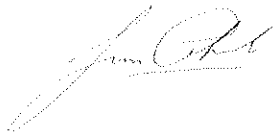
Ratifying the Optional Protocol would be an important indication that the Government is willing to be held to account on children's rights. This is particularly significant as the Government prepares to report to the Committee in 2014.

We are keen to work with the Government to ensure that children's rights are respected and we look forward to hearing whether the Government will sign this important instrument as a matter of urgency, and proceed to ratification without delay. We would welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss this issue.

Yours sincerely



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CC: Rt Hon William Hague MP
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Sarah Teather MP