Statement

by

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Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations

to the United Nations

at the high-level meeting

of the General Assembly

“Thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child”

New York, November 20, 2019

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Mr. President,

This morning, I received a letter from Tejaswini, a grade 9 school girl from St. Anthony’s High School in Hyderabad, India, which advocates for the environment, lobbying me for an issue on behalf of her country. Tejaswini is but an example of children around the world who are advocating, and leading passionately as Deputy-Secretary-General Amina Mohammad said this morning, for the best of their world. Our world.

Thirty years after the we all came together, to speak on behalf children’s rights and adopt the Convention on the Child, we hear children’s voices loud and clear around the world, that they want change. The President of the General Assembly told them this morning: “We hear you”. I hope this resonates around the world and that they are heard everywhere by all of us. It is important to recognize their angst because they are the ones who are going to live in the future, and they are not confident that what we are leaving them is sustainable.

After thirty years, achievements are undeniable as the executive director to UNICEF Ms. Henrietta Fore told us. Progress was made on all rights of children, on education, healthcare, getting them out of poverty, on discrimination, abuse, exploitation, and child labor. But, and as we heard this morning, the work is not done, and progress is too slow, and millions are left behind.

Millions of children are living in precarious conditions, millions are suffering from armed conflicts, millions are subjected to violence and bullying, to child prostitution and child pornography, to child slavery, to genital mutilation, to exploitation, to forced marriage, to harmful practices, to discrimination, to neglect, to indifference.

Mr. President,

It is a country’s highest duty to protect its most vulnerable and it is a country’s greatest shame when it fails to do so especially to its own future.

Lebanon reaffirms today its steadfast commitment to fulfill all the promises we made 30 years ago by creating a safe and better life for children in line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The promise of a free education for all children, the promise of free healthcare, the promise of a future worthy of their dreams.

We seize this opportunity to thank UNICEF - Lebanon whose efforts remain essential in driving child protection policies on all levels from education, to gender-based violence, child marriage, child protection and child labor. We also thank the civil society, activists and Children Human Rights Defenders who are our true partners towards fulfilling the promises of CRC.

Mr. President,

To the youth and children delegates here in this hall I say: you are the hope for peace… the peace the world so far failed to give you. You are the hope of a tomorrow, we look forward to; tomorrow when you will do better than we ever did, and go farther than we ever thought we could.
Allow me to conclude by quoting the Lebanese writer and poet Gibran Khalil Gibran:

“Your children are not your children,

They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.

(…)

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.”

I thank you Mr. President.