



## Training online sessions on the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child a Communications Procedure (OPIC)

November 19, 2021



Please register [here](#)

*Participants will be invited and able to choose the group/session they would like to join according to the criteria in section 5*

### 1. Context and purpose

Organised by the [Global Initiative on Justice with Children](#)<sup>1</sup>, the **World Congress on Justice with Children** is an international platform and interactive space that gathers children alongside policymakers, legal practitioners, academics, and civil society representatives with relevant work experience to influence Child Justice, explore best practices, foster scientific cooperation, and raise awareness on child-friendly justice.

The next World Congress, under the title “Ensuring access to justice for all children: towards non-discriminatory and inclusive child justice systems”, will take place online from the **15th to the 20th of November 2021**. The Congress is hosted by the Federal Mexican Supreme Court of Justice, with technical support from UNICEF, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (SRSV/VAC), the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), OECD, and Pathfinders for peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Over five days, attendees will participate in and contribute to plenary sessions, workshops, and master classes, alongside training and/or policy-oriented working groups.

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Initiative is led by a group of international organisations including Terre des hommes, Penal Reform International, International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates and the International Institute for the Rights of the Child (IDE).

Within the framework of this year's World Congress, on November 19, **Child Rights Connect, as Friend of the World Congress**, in close collaboration with members of the **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child** (the Committee) and **experts from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** (OHCHR), is organising an online training session on the OPIC<sup>2</sup>. After a brief presentation of the instrument, its mechanisms and recent trends, participants will be divided into two different groups. Each group will focus on two different topics:

- 1) the promotion of the OPIC's ratification
- 2) its strategic use and effective implementation by children's rights defenders, including children.

The OPIC is an international treaty that allows the Committee to hear complaints concerning the violations of child rights. Or in other words, it allows accountability for children's rights violations. It is a unique tool to strengthen the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) at the national level and it has great theoretical and practical importance in terms of enhancing access to justice for children at the international and national levels.

Indeed, the entry into force in 2014 of the OPIC and the subsequent development of relevant jurisprudence by the Committee have been a milestone for the recognition of children's rights to effective remedies and to enhance access to justice through an international child-sensitive mechanism that can fill the gaps at the national level.

The nearly universal ratification of the UNCRC raises expectation of equally high ratification of the Optional Protocols. However, to date, only 48 countries in the world have ratified the OPIC.<sup>3</sup> As it was noted during the 2019 Roundtable discussion held on the occasion on the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OPIC's entry into force<sup>4</sup> and again reminded at this year's Annual informal exchange between the Committee and States on the OPIC, the Protocol remains widely unknown, underused and/or largely misunderstood.

Therefore, and perhaps now more than ever, it becomes imperative to raise awareness and develop and disseminate more accessible information on the OPIC. To this end and following one of its four main strategic priorities<sup>5</sup>, Child Rights Connect has been developing and organising multiple capacity building workshops, trainings, and webinars to promote a better understanding of the OPIC, its increased ratification and effective use and implementation.

This online training on the OPIC at the 2021 World Congress certainly comes at a time where access to justice, as a central yet neglected child rights issue, is gaining momentum at the international level. Relevant discussions on this topic have taken place over this year, such as the 2021 HLPF side-event on Equitable access to justice for all children.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Training objectives

Overall objectives for both training sessions:

- Raise awareness and promote a better understanding of the OPIC and its mechanisms
- Reinforce the existing link between access to non-discriminatory, child-friendly, and inclusive justice systems and the OPIC

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<sup>2</sup> Full text of the OPIC can be found here in different languages:

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=A/RES/66/138&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=A/RES/66/138&Lang=en)

<sup>3</sup> More on the OPIC's ratification status here: <https://opic.childrightsconnect.org/ratification-status/>

<sup>4</sup> See here the [Roundtable's report on the key findings of the discussion](#).

<sup>5</sup> Find here [Child Rights Connect's Five Year Strategic Plan \(2020-2024\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> Find here the full recording of the event: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Njbm\\_MoJlI8&t=4031s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Njbm_MoJlI8&t=4031s)

- Integrate OPIC ratification and implementation in the ongoing work of participants
- Build and strengthen partnerships and joint action around advocacy for OPIC ratification and effective implementation and strategic use
- For participants to exchange and learn from other national OPIC ratification and implementation efforts and experiences.

In relation to the training session focused on the promotion of the OPIC's ratification, the objectives are to:

- Understand the added value of the instrument and analyse solid and evidence-based arguments on the benefits of the OPIC at a national level
- Understand the reasons behind non-ratification
- Share ratification and non-ratification experiences
- Discuss difficulties and challenges encountered in the process of ratification and possible solutions or ways to overcome them
- Identify critical success factors in the ratification campaigns and processes

In relation to the training session focused on the OPIC's strategic use and effective implementation, the objectives are to:

- Help participants identify and understand the essential requirements to be able to use OPIC's mechanisms
- Help participants understand the key strategic differences between OPIC's two main procedures: the individual communications procedure and the inquiry procedure
- Explain admissibility requirements for individual communications
- Allow for participants to raise any questions and/or concerns in relation to the OPIC and its strategic and effective use and implementation

### 3. Target audience

The audience will be wide and diverse. Potential participants will include:

- Children, child delegates and child human rights defenders (CHRDs)
- Civil society
- Lawyers and legal practitioners
- Judges and prosecutors
- Academia
- UN agencies

Please check below the criteria for participation in each training session (section 5).

### 4. Training structure and agenda

The online workshops will be hosted online on **Friday 19, November 2021 from 10 to 11.30 am (CEST)** via Zoom.

#### **10.00 – 10.30 am Introduction and opening remarks from Child Rights Connect (5 minutes)**

Short presentation by Ann Skelton (Introducing the OPIC), member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and Coordinator of the Committee's Working Group on Individual Communications (25 minutes)

- What is the OPIC? What are its mechanisms?
- Recent trends
- Jurisprudence highlights

**10.30 – 11.30 am**      **Two simultaneous training sessions:**

**Group 1. Advancing towards the ratification of the OPIC: Why and How?**

*Coordinated by Beatriz Santaemilia and Olivia Solari (Child Rights Connect)*

- a. Presentation by Beatriz Santaemilia (Child Rights Connect) – Added value of the OPIC (10-15 minutes)
- b. Experiences of ratification/non-ratification:
  - Mohan Dangal (Director Child Nepal) (15 minutes)
  - Katherine Walton (Chair of Amnesty International Children’s Human Rights Network, United Kingdom) (15 minutes)
- c. Open discussion with participants where Ann Skelton, member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and Child Rights Connect will participate (20 minutes)

**Group 2. The OPIC: strategic use and effective implementation by children’s rights defenders, including children**

*Coordinated by Leire Ibáñez and Lola Sánchez (Child Rights Connect)*

- a. Presentation by Anna Batalla (Petitions Unit, OHCHR) – Strategic use of the OPIC (30 minutes)
- b. Open discussion with participants where Benoît van Keirsbilck, member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Anna Batalla and Child Rights Connect will participate (30 minutes)

**11.30 – 11.35 am**

**Closing remarks**

**5. Criteria for participation**

After the initial presentation, participants will be divided in two different groups. To make this training session more profitable and useful for participants, we encourage participants to join only one of the groups according, inter alia, to the following criteria:

- a) The OPIC’s ratification status of the State or States where participants **develop their professional activity or have been or are working in**. If participants developed or are developing their professional activity in a State that is only signatory or has taken no action towards ratifying the instrument, we encourage participants to join Group 1. Otherwise, if the State in question is party to the OPIC, we encourage participants join Group 2. Information on ratification status according to three categories (State party, only signatory and no action) can be found at Child Rights Connect’s OPIC mini site: <https://opic.childrightsconnect.org/ratification-status/>
- b) The OPIC’s ratification status of the State or States participants are from or **participants’ country or countries of origin**. If participants are from a State that is only signatory or has taken no action towards ratifying the OPIC, we encourage their participation in the training session focusing on the promotion of the OPIC’s ratification (Group 1). Otherwise, if the State in question is party to the OPIC, we encourage participants to join Group 2. Information on ratification status according to three categories (State party, only signatory and no action) can be found at Child Rights Connect’s OPIC mini site: <https://opic.childrightsconnect.org/ratification-status/>

- c) Their **previous knowledge** of the instrument and its mechanisms
- d) Their **professional or personal interests**

During the Zoom meeting, participants will be invited to manually choose the group/session they wish to join.

## **6. Registration**

Please register here: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

This year, the World Congress is free of charge and participants will receive a **certificate of attendance**.