

A young child with curly hair, wearing a grey jacket and shorts, stands in the center of a war-torn city street. The ground is covered in rubble and debris. In the background, there is a large, dark, skeletal structure of a destroyed building with orange flames or smoke rising from it. A damaged car is visible to the right. The overall atmosphere is somber and urgent.

STOP WAR

on Children **NOW!**

25.9.2025

80TH UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
High-Level Session



About the ECPC

The ECPC is a global consortium of United Nations agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, academia, practitioners, and the private sector focused on sharing scientific and practice-based evidence on how investment in early childhood development (ECD) can contribute to sustainable peace, social cohesion, and social justice. We recognize that investing in ECD is a powerful and cost-effective strategy for reducing violence, poverty, and exclusion and for building peaceful societies. For further information please visit the ECPC at ecdpeace.org or contact us at secretariat@ecdpeace.org.

Acknowledgements

The ECPC expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the to the **Mission of Ireland** for the opportunity to present at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

This high-level session at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly is made possible by the generous support by the **Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV)**.

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Photo (Pg 6): Dreamstime 103062798



Excellencies the Ambassadors. Distinguished Representatives of the United Nations and Non-Governmental Organizations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
It gives me great pleasure and honor to welcome you to the 80th United Nations General Assembly High-Level Session *Stop War on Children NOW! Why science says protecting children’s rights today prevents tomorrow’s conflict.*

I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation on behalf of the Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC) to the Permanent Mission of Ireland for gracefully sponsoring this important high-level event.

The key objective of this high-level event is to bring attention to the unprecedented and alarming situation of children living in wars and conflict zones. These children are killed, maimed, starved, attacked in their schools, denied humanitarian response, and forcibly displaced.

The voices of these children as well as the voices of their parents and families will echo in the conference room, telling their stories of deprivation, sacrifice, and determination to forge a better future for themselves and their families.

These children want us to listen and act!

They want us to break the cycles of violence and despair, protecting and upholding the rights of all children.

This powerful gathering features ambassadors, high-level United Nations officials, representatives of United Nations missions, religious leaders, representatives of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academics, and practitioners who will underscore the urgent need to protect children living in wars and conflict zones.

It will highlight the scientific- and practice-based evidence of the devastating intergenerational impact of war on children now and for future generations. The debate will underscore the urgent need to prioritize investment in Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a powerful and cost-effective strategy to reduce violence and exclusion while fostering social cohesion and justice.

The timely launch of the Early Childhood Peace Consortium’s five-year strategic plan will further provide examples of solutions to address the challenges that millions of children face today.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,

Let us all raise our voices for peace.

We must together maintain our advocacy to stop war on children.

Together, we can achieve a world of peace for children.

The time is now.

We are stronger together.

Respectfully,

Rima Salah

Chairperson for the Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC)

STOP WAR on Children *NOW!*

EARLY CHILDHOOD PEACE CONSORTIUM (ECPC)

Thursday / 25 September 2025

PROGRAMME

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM / EST

PERMANENT MISSION OF IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
885 2ND AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

WELCOME

Master of Ceremony
Dr. Pia Rebello Britto—Global Director, Education and
Adolescent Development at UNICEF

WELCOME ADDRESS

His Excellency Ambassador Fergal Mythen
Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

WORDS OF THANKS

Dr. Rima Salah
Chairperson, Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC)

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Dr. Najat Maalla M’jid
Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children,
and Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Mrs. Suna Hanoz-Penney
Co-Chairperson ECPC Policy & Advocacy Division; International Programs Director,
AÇEV-Mother Child Education Foundation, Turkey

Dr. Ali Shaar
Chairperson ECPC Research Division; Director, Palestinian Child Institute
/ An-Najah National University

VOICES OF SCIENCE

Facilitator: Dr. Sascha Hein
Chair ECPC Research Division; Professor, Freie Universität Berlin; Assistant Professor
Adjunct, Yale Child Study Center

Dr. Catherine Panter-Brick
Bruce A. and Davi-Ellen Chabner Professor of Anthropology, Health, and Global
Affairs (Anthropology, Yale Jackson School of Global Affairs)

Dr. Theresa S. Betancourt
Salem Professor in Global Practice, Boston College

Dr. Hirokazu Yoshikawa
Courtney Sale Ross Professor of Globalization and Education at NYU Steinhardt

PROMISING PROGRAMS

Dr. Siobhan Fitzpatrick
ECPC Vice-Chairperson Regional; Chairperson of the International Network on Peace
Building for Young Children; Former Chief Executive Officer of Early Years -
the organization for young children

STAND UP FOR CHILDREN IN WAR CAMPAIGN

Maria Lucia Uribe Torres
Executive Director of Arigatou International Geneva and Head of the Ethics
Education for Children Initiative. She convenes the International Consortium on
Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence

OPEN DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS

Compere/Master of Ceremony, Dr. Pia Britto
Global Director, Education and Adolescent Development at UNICEF

CONVERSATION WITH INVITED JOURNALISTS

Facilitator: Franz Joseph Hartl II, JD
ECPC Executive Committee Member; Associate Director for Digital Experience,
Yale University

CLOSING REMARKS

His Excellency Archbishop Gabriele Caccia
Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations



EARLY CHILDHOOD PEACE CONSORTIUM (ECPC) CALL TO ACTION

Stop War Against Children NOW!

We must act to break the cycle of violence and protect children from the impact of wars and conflicts. Collectively, we must:

- **Maintain unwavering advocacy** to uphold children's rights and stop the war on children and their families, making this a global priority.
- **Raise the voices of children and families**, so they echo throughout the world and in the conference rooms of the United Nations. Let them tell their stories of sacrifice, determination, and hope for a better future.
- **Protect children in war and conflict** by supporting their mothers, fathers and other caregivers. Upholding the rights and safety of caregivers is a fundamental condition for the protection of children.
- **Ensure that Early Childhood Development evidence-based programmes are prioritized** as lifesaving and continue throughout humanitarian responses.



Master of Ceremonies

Pia Britto, PhD—*Global Director, Education and Adolescent Development at UNICEF*

Pia Rebello Britto was appointed the Global Director of Education and Adolescent Development at UNICEF in August 2024. In this role, she provides strategic vision and leadership for UNICEF's education and adolescent development programmes, overseeing the development of policies, strategies, and guidance to implement learning initiatives for children globally.

Before this role, Britto served as UNICEF's Representative to the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), where she led the organization's work in realizing children's rights across education, health, protection, water and sanitation, climate action, and emergency response. She has also held the role of UNICEF's Global Chief and Senior Advisor of Early Childhood Development, spearheading a global movement to give every child the best start in life.

Britto joined UNICEF after an academic career as an Assistant Professor at Yale University and earned her doctoral degree in Developmental Psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University.

She is a globally recognized expert with over 100 publications, including books, peer-reviewed articles, and reports in the field of child development and learning. Britto is also the recipient of numerous national and international awards and is widely cited in both academic research and media for her contributions to child development.

Britto's work is grounded in her commitment to ensuring the right to education, learning and skills for every child and young person. She is a national of the United States and is fluent in English and Hindi and speaks several South Asian languages. (Photo UNICEF/UNI668966/Voisard). ■



Welcome Address

H.E. Ambassador Fergal Mythen—*Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations*

Prior to this appointment, Ambassador Mythen spent considerable periods of his career working for the Government of Ireland in support of the Northern Ireland peace process and implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

Most recently, as Director-General of the Ireland, UK and Americas Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs from 2017 to 2022, he led the team working on Northern Ireland, Irish-British relations, Irish-US and Irish-Canadian relations, and relations with the Latin America-Caribbean region. Ambassador Mythen also previously served in Ireland's Permanent Representation to the European Union in Brussels, and with the EU in Sarajevo.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Trinity College, Dublin, and a higher diploma in business studies from University College Dublin. ■



Words of Thanks

Rima Salah, PhD—*Chairperson for the Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC); Assistant Clinical Professor in the Yale Child Study Center*

Dr. Salah has served as a Member of the United Nations High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (2014-15), and as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). In addition, Dr. Salah has had a distinguished career with UNICEF. Her service includes Deputy Executive Director for UNICEF (2004-2007, 2011-2012), Regional Director for West and Central Africa (1999-2004), and UNICEF representative in several countries including Vietnam, Burkina Faso as well as head of office in Queta, Pakistan.

As a highly effective advocate for the rights of children and women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, she contributed to Security Council Resolution (SC) Resolution 1612 on Child Rights Violations and other Resolutions.

Dr. Salah has received many awards of distinction from several Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations, including the French Legion of Honor. On September 23, 2021, Salah was awarded the 2021 Peacemaker Award from the Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution (CPCR) at the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University.

In October 2015, Dr. Salah was elected to Chair the newly formed Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC). The ECPC, launched at UNICEF HQ in September 2013, brought together leaders from international organizations, academia, practice, philanthropy, networks media and development.

Dr. Salah is at the Child Study Center, Yale School of Medicine. She is co-editor of the volume at MIT Press, *Pathways to Peace: The Transformative Power of Children and Families*. She holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from SUNY-Binghamton. ■



Keynote Address

Najat Maalla M'jid, MD—*Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children and Acting Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict; Member, ECPC Executive Committee*

On 30 May 2019, the Secretary-General appointed Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid (Morocco) as his Special Representative on Violence against Children. Dr. Maalla M'jid took her position on 1st July 2019.

Dr. M'jid, a medical doctor in pediatrics, has over the last three decades devoted her life to the promotion and protection of children's rights. She was Head of the Pediatric Department and Director of the Hay Hassani Mother-Child hospital in Casablanca. Dr. M'jid was a member of the Moroccan National Council on Human Rights and founder of the non-governmental organisation Bayti, the first programme addressing the situation of children living and working in the streets of Morocco.

From 2008 to 2014, she served as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Dr. M'jid also worked as an international expert on developing and monitoring integrated

child protection strategies and policies, as well as on social and development policies. She also worked as a lecturer in Moroccan and international universities on child rights protection and monitoring.

As a member of several regional and international non-governmental organizations and networks working for children's rights, Dr. M'jid was also involved in the training of social workers, law enforcement, teachers, judges, and medical staff. She is the recipient of numerous awards and honors for her strong commitment to protecting children and their rights. ■



Voices from the Field

Suna Hanöz-Penney, MA, MPA—*Director of Strategy, International Programmes and Partnerships at AÇEV— Mother Child Education Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey; Co-Chairperson, ECPC Policy and Advocacy Division*

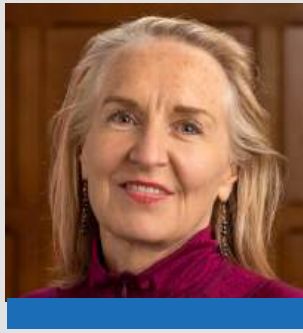
Mrs. Hanoz-Penney's work involves building collaborative partnerships, while she manages the transfer and implementation of AÇEV's educational programmes to local organizations in numerous countries including Cambodia, Tanzania, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Brazil. She designs and supervises the early intervention programmes for children and families implemented at both the national and international fields. Suna is a Fulbright Scholar, received her dual MA degree in Early Childhood Education from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a Master of Public Administration from John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. She also holds dual BA degrees in Early Childhood Education and Psychological Guidance and Counseling from Boğazici University, Istanbul. ■



Voices of Science

Sascha Hein, PhD—*Professor in the Department of Education and Psychology at the Free University of Berlin; Assistant Professor Adjunct in the Yale Child Study Center; Chairperson, ECPC Research Division*

Dr. Hein received his PhD in Educational Science from Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. He completed a three-year post-doctoral training at the Yale Child Study Center before his position as faculty in the Measurement, Quantitative Methods, and Learning Sciences Programme at the University of Houston. Over the past decade, his research has focused on early childhood development and education in humanitarian contexts. He is also leading research on the education and mental health of individuals from marginalized and minoritized communities, such as refugee families and individuals involved in the juvenile justice system. ■



Catherine Panter-Brick, PhD—*Bruce A. and Davi-Ellen Chabner Professor of Anthropology, Health, and Global Affairs (Anthropology, Yale Jackson School of Global Affairs); Member, ECPC Expert Support Group*

Dr. Panter-Brick leads initiatives to develop strong, equitable partnerships across research, practice, and policy. Her research with Afghan and Syrian refugees stands as a leading example of inter-generational approaches that strengthen child and adolescent development, mental health, and social cohesion in war-affected communities. Panter-Brick received the Lucy Mair Medal from the Royal Anthropological Institute, honoring excellence in the application of anthropology to the active recognition of human dignity. She has authored 190 scientific publications in biomedical and social science journals, and coedited seven books and several policy briefs, including *How Global Peacebuilders Think*, *In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace*, *Intergenerational Pathways to Peace*, and *Strategies for Sustainable Peacebuilding*. ■



Theresa S. Betancourt, ScD, MA—*Salem Professor and Director of the Research Program on Children and Adversity (RPCA), Boston College of Social Work*

Dr. Betancourt is the inaugural Salem Professor in Global Practice at the Boston College School of Social Work and Director of the Research Program on Children and Adversity (RPCA). Her work focuses on the psychosocial impact of adversity on children and families, resilience, and mental health services research. She is Principal Investigator of an intergenerational study of war-affected youth in Sierra Leone and leads implementation science research in Rwanda to examine strategies for scaling and sustaining quality in an evidence-based home visiting intervention to promote early childhood development and prevent violence (Sugira Muryango). Using community-based participatory research methods, she has co-developed similar family strengthening interventions for resettling refugee families in the U.S. raising school-age children.

Dr. Betancourt has served as an advisor for UNICEF, the International Rescue Committee, Amnesty International, the US Institute of Peace, and the World Health Organization, and served as an expert on the International Criminal Court. Her book, *Shadows into Light: A Generation of Former Child Soldiers Comes of Age*, published in 2025 by Harvard University Press, provides insights into the long-term psychological and developmental effects of family separation, war, and exposure to violence as well as lessons of resilience. Dr. Betancourt has been profiled in the BC Chronicle, Boston Globe, CNN, NPR, SIRIUS FM, WHYY Radio, New Yorker, National Geographic, BOLD, BBC.com, and in an interview with Larry King on “Politick.” In 2025, she joined the board of Save the Children U.S. ■



Hiro Yoshikawa, PhD—*Hirokazu Yoshikawa is the Courtney Sale Ross Professor of Globalization and Education at NYU Steinhardt and a University Professor at NYU; Member, ECPC Expert Support Group*

From 2014 to 2024 Dr. Yoshikawa was a founding co-director (with J. Lawrence Aber) of the Global TIES for Children center at NYU, now led by Florencia Lopez Boo. He is a community and developmental psychologist who conducts research-policy and research-practice partnerships related to immigration, early childhood, youth development, and poverty reduction across the lifespan. He conducts research in the United States and in Latin America, South Asia and the Middle East. His recent projects include leading the research and evaluation for Ahlan Simsim, the first MacArthur Foundation 100&Change award (with Sesame Workshop and the International Rescue Committee, implementing and evaluating early childhood programming for Syrian refugee families in the Middle East, as well as Play to Learn, providing and evaluating early childhood programs for Rohingya in Bangladesh as well as in humanitarian contexts in the Middle East and Colombia. He serves on the Board of Trustees of the William T. Grant Foundation; the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel(GEEAP); and the LEVANTE advisory board of the Jacobs Foundation. He is an elected fellow of the National Academy of Education, the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. ■



Promising Programs

Siobhan Fitzpatrick, CBE, MBA, MSSC, CQSW, BSc—*Chairperson of the International Network on Peace Building with Young Children (INPB); Regional Vice-Chairperson, ECPC; Chairperson ECPC Programmatic Division*

Dr. Fitzpatrick is a founder member and Chairperson of the International Network on Peace Building with Young Children (INPB). She is also a founder member and vice chairperson of the Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC). She was Chief Executive Officer for Early Years - the organisation for young children from 1989-2019 and currently works as a Senior Consultant for the Organisation, leading international Early Childhood Development (ECD) and peacebuilding activities. She is an Advisory Board member of the Palestinian Child Institute and a member of the New Ireland Commission. ■



Stand Up for Children in War Campaign

Maria Lucia Uribe Torres, MA—*Executive Director of Arigatou International Geneva since 2013*

In her role as Executive Director, Ms. Torres currently heads the strategic implementation and expansion of the Ethics Education for Children Initiative in more than 30 countries, ensuring that values-based education in formal and non-formal settings is integrated into programs to respond to the prevention of violence and the promotion of peace building and interfaith and intercultural learning and collaboration. Ms. Uribe is also in charge of developing and maintaining Arigatou International’s engagement in child rights initiatives with UN

Uribe Torres, continued on page 12

Uribe Torres, continued from page 11

agencies and child rights focused NGOs in Geneva.

Ms. Uribe is currently convener of the International Consortium on Nurturing Values in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence, and of the Working Group on Children and Violence of Child Rights Connect. Previously she served as Coordinator of the Working Group on Education and Fragility for the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). Ms. Uribe holds a master's degree in Peace and Conflict Transformation from the University of Basel, Switzerland; a specialization in Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and a bachelor's degree in International Relations and Finances from Externado University in Colombia. Ms. Uribe serves on the Executive Committee of Child Rights Connect; she is a member of the G20 Interfaith Forum Working Group on Education, and from 2017 to 2021 she served in the Steering Group of the International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development – PaRD. ■



Invited Missions and Panel of Policymakers and Non-Governmental Organizations

Janti Soeripto—*President & Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children*

Janti Soeripto is President and CEO of Save the Children US, a role she assumed in 2020 as the international humanitarian organization began its second century partnering with families in the US and around the world.

Before leading Save the Children US, Janti served as deputy CEO of Save the Children International for eight years. She oversaw market growth and guided strategy as Save the Children transformed into an integrated international body after decades as a decentralized group of national organizations.

Janti began her global career in the private sector. For over 15 years, she held senior positions at corporations including Kimberly-Clark and Unilever, working in her home country of the Netherlands, as well as Indonesia, the United Kingdom and Singapore.

Janti has been featured in a variety of prominent media and is sought after for her insights on global leadership in both the public and private sectors and her expertise on humanitarian crises affecting children. She has been quoted in outlets including Associated Press, POLITICO, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post, and has been interviewed on CBS News “Face the Nation,” CNN, NPR, PBS “Amanpour & Co.,” and American Public Media’s “Marketplace.”

Janti’s past speaking engagements include those hosted by Clinton Global Initiative, Concordia, Global Philanthropy Forum, Milken Institute, World Bank, and the United Nations, among others.

Janti holds master’s degrees in Economics and Finance, speaks Dutch, English, Indonesian, and German, and is half-Indonesian, half-Dutch. She is a parent of two children and lives in Connecticut, USA. ■



Franz Joseph Hartl II, JD—*Executive Committee Member, Early Childhood Peace Consortium; Associate Director for Digital Experience, Yale University*

Mr. Hartl serves on the Board and Executive Committee of the Early Childhood Peace Consortium, where he champions the use of open-source technology to connect global communities and disseminate research. In 2018, he launched the ECPC’s digital platform at Yale, creating infrastructure that enables scientists, practitioners, and diplomats to share knowledge across disciplines and borders.

At Yale University, he leads the YaleSites platform, which unites over 1,000 academic departments, research centers, and programs through shared digital infrastructure—demonstrating how technology can foster institutional cohesion while preserving individual community identities. Previously, he served as Digital Manager for Georgetown University’s Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, managing digital strategies for international affairs education. His advocacy for open-source solutions stems from his belief that technology should serve the common good by removing barriers to knowledge sharing. Mr. Hartl speaks frequently at technology conferences on democratizing access through open-source platforms. He also serves on the Advisory Board of Catholic International University. He holds a JD from Fordham University School of Law and a BA from Boston College. ■



Closing Remarks

His Excellency Archbishop Gabriele Caccia—*Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations*

Archbishop Gabriele Caccia is a seasoned Vatican diplomat who has dedicated over three decades to serving the Catholic Church’s international mission. Born in Milan, Italy, on February 24, 1958, he currently holds one of the Holy See’s most prestigious diplomatic positions as Permanent Observer to the United Nations in New York.

Ordained to the priesthood on June 11, 1983, for the Archdiocese of Milan, Archbishop Caccia began his ministry serving as an Assistant Parish Priest until 1986. His pastoral experience provided him with a solid foundation in Church life that would later inform his diplomatic service.

From 1987 to 1991, he pursued advanced studies at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, the Vatican’s elite diplomatic school in Rome. He earned both a Doctorate in Theology and a Licentiate in Canon Law from the Pontifical Gregorian University, establishing his credentials for high-level Church diplomacy.

Key Milestone: Archbishop Caccia joined the Holy See’s Diplomatic Service in 1991, beginning with his first assignment at the Apostolic Nunciature in Tanzania.

His exceptional service led to rapid advancement within the Vatican hierarchy. In 1993, he was appointed Secretary of the Substitute for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State, and by 2002, he had been promoted to Assessor for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State, placing him at the center of Vatican governance.

Caccia, continued on page 14

Pope Benedict XVI elevated him to the episcopacy in 2009, appointing him Apostolic Nuncio to Lebanon and Titular Archbishop of Sepino. He was ordained Bishop by the Pope himself in St. Peter's Basilica on September 12, 2009.

In 2017, Pope Francis appointed him Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, where he served the dynamic Catholic community of that nation until 2019.

His experience in both the Middle East and Southeast Asia provided him with valuable insights into diverse cultural and religious contexts.

Since November 16, 2019, Archbishop Caccia has served as the Holy See's Permanent Observer to the United Nations, representing the Vatican's moral voice on global issues including peace, human rights, social justice, and international development. This role allows him to advocate for the Church's social teachings on the world's most prominent international platform.

Through his distinguished career, Archbishop Caccia exemplifies the Vatican's commitment to international dialogue and diplomacy, bringing decades of experience in both pastoral ministry and high-level diplomatic service to his current mission at the United Nations. ■



Contact Us

For further information please visit the ECPC website at ecdpeace.org or write info@ecdpeace.org.

Photo: World Vision International W177-0125-013



Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC)

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Joanna Rubinstein, DDS, PhD—Council Member, U.N. Sustainable Development Solutions Network; Former President and CEO, Childhood USA; Former Commissioner, UN Broadband Commission, USA

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