



49th session of the Human Rights Council

**Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child
The rights of the child and family reunification**

Benelux intervention
9 March 2022

I deliver this statement on behalf of the three Benelux countries, Belgium, the Netherlands and my own country, Luxembourg.

The Benelux countries are shocked by the extremely high numbers of children who are on the move alone or being separated from their families within and across borders in a flagrant violation of article 10 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Migrant and refugee children separated from their families are at heightened risk of suffering violence, abuse, neglect, trafficking and exploitation. All of these are a denial of their economic, social and cultural rights. All of these will scar their physical and mental health and development for life.

The heart-rending testimonies of children in the report of the High Commissioner on the rights of the child and family reunification clearly show the devastating impact of family separation on children. Listening to the voices of children is critical in order to properly address the implications of family separation on children's rights and we commend the High Commissioner for including their views in the report. We would appreciate more such efforts to hear directly from children on all matters that affect them.

Children's rights apply to all children, at any point in time, without discrimination. States have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all children affected by family separation in line with the best interest of the child.

The Benelux countries agree that urgent steps must be taken to bring national migration laws, policies and practices in line with human rights obligations. Any such measures that arbitrarily separate children from their families must be abolished. They need to have a child-sensitive approach built-in from the ground up, so as to allow proper access in practice. This also includes that children's views are listened to and taken into account in assessment and determination processes, which should be carried out by appropriately trained officials in accordance with article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Benelux countries remain committed to realising the rights of every child so that children can grow up in a safe and nurturing family environment and maintain these family relations.

Thank you.