

INTERNATIONAL
CHILD
PROTECTION
NETWORK
OF CANADA



April 10, 2017

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland PC, MP,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Global Affairs Canada
125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

The Honourable Harjit S. Sajjan PC, OMM, MSM, CD, MP,
Minister of National Defence
National Defence
101 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, ON K1A 0K2

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau PC, MP,
Minister of International Development and La Francophonie
Global Affairs Canada
125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

Re: Protecting Education from Attack

Dear Ministers Freeland, Sajjan and Bibeau,

As members of the Canadian International Education Policy Working Group (CIEPWG) and the International Child Protection Network of Canada (ICPNC), we are writing to commend the Government of Canada for taking a strong stand against attacks on education by endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration, as well as for endorsing and implementing the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*.

CIEPWG is a coalition of international development agencies working to support policies and programs to improve access to safe, inclusive, quality education for all children and youth. The ICPNC is a collaboration of child-centered international development organizations and experts committed to increasing the effectiveness of child protection programs, policies and procedures, and to support Canada as a global leader in the area of child protection.

By signing the Safe Schools Declaration, Canada has advanced its global reputation as a defender of children's rights and as a leading advocate for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. Canada should continue to work to see that civilians and civilian infrastructure, including schools, are respected and protected in the conduct of hostilities, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. We have been further encouraged by Canada's continued leadership by investing in the education and protection of children affected by conflict and crises. This has been demonstrated through Canada's financial and political commitments to Education Cannot Wait, No Lost Generation and other such initiatives.

As an important next step, we commend The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces for their commitment to work to integrate and implement the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*. In particular, the publication of the new CAF doctrine released on prevention of the use of child soldiers which will include the Safe Schools Declaration and the accompanying toolkit into field training and preparation of CAF personnel. This change in military practices will contribute to the safety and protection of schools in times of crisis.

Global Affairs Canada should also prioritize child safeguarding standards as a central tenet of Canada's international assistance and humanitarian response. Canada's safeguarding priorities should work to ensure the protection of all children in the context of peace operations. As part of its revitalized engagement with peace operations, Canada can play an important role in strengthening the policies, procedures and mechanisms necessary to protect children from violence and abuse by peacekeepers themselves. Where peacekeeping operations are underway, these mechanisms will also help to hold perpetrators to account, and means to ensure victims receive the specialized gender-responsive services required to support their recovery.

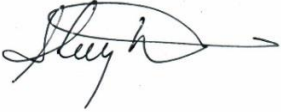
In addition, we look to Global Affairs Canada to elaborate its commitment to education in emergencies and child protection through its international assistance policy, including through the review and release of a robust Education Strategy for Development Assistance.

Both CIEPWG and the ICPNC, together with The Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative and Human Rights Watch, would welcome the opportunity to take forward these discussions and partner in the development and implementation of such strategies. We thank you for Canada's continued leadership on these critical issues, which will play a key role in supporting our shared values – to see the world's most vulnerable children continue to learn in safe school environments and reach their full potential.

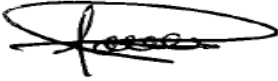
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Erb', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patricia Erb
Chair, International Child Protection Network Canada (ICPNC)
President and CEO, Save the Children



Dr. Shelly Whitman
Executive Director, The Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers



Farida Deif
Canada Director, Human Rights Watch

CIEWPG leadership



Scott Walter, Executive Director, CODE



Dominic Mishio, Canada Director, Global Citizen



Caroline Riseboro, President and CEO, Plan International Canada



Randy Rudolph, Board Chair, RESULTS Canada



Kevin Frey, President and CEO, Right to Play



David Morley, President and CEO, UNICEF Canada



Lorna Read, Chief Operating Officer, War Child Canada



Michael Messenger, President & CEO World Vision Canada



Chris Eaton, Executive Director, WUSC

cc:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau P.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Canada

Encl.:

Letter to Minister of Foreign Affairs - Safe Schools Declaration