

## UN NGO Committee on the Family Asserts Children's Parental Rights

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**New York, United States** –The NGO Committee on the Family, NY (NGOCF), of which UPF is an executive member, held a webinar on November 14, 2024, titled "Responsible Parents, Responsible Children: Celebrating the Convention on the Rights of the Child." The 1989 convention was the first international agreement dedicated to the universal rights of children. It contains thirty-three references to the roles, duties and responsibilities of parents in protecting, educating, and advocating for their children.

**Ms. Lynn Walsh**, director of UPF's Office of the Family, moderated the panel and opened the discussion. **Ms. Marcia Barlow**, policy director of United Families International, managed the discussion with the audience.

**Rabbi Diana Gerson**, associate executive vice president of the New York Board of Rabbis and a member of the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities Secretariat, described aspects of the CRC that have advanced children's rights and protections. Almost 200 signatory nations have committed to tackling injustices to children around the world. There has been a reduction in child labor, child marriage, child abuse, and human trafficking, although these horrendous practices have been far from eliminated. Also, children's rights to education, safety, health care, and emotional support have improved.

Rabbi Gerson reminded participants that parents provide a unique emotional safe haven for their children, necessary for them to develop relationally and emotionally. Parents' responsibility includes maximizing the children's trust and connection to them, she said, so that a child can go to them when confused or in danger. She said the CRC has increased an honoring of children's opinions, giving them a voice in the home and, increasingly, in governmental policies.

Children's rights to their own thoughts, beliefs and religious faith are upheld in the CRC, the rabbi noted, stating that faith communities provide moral impetus and grassroots energy to advance the universal rights and well-being of children.

Rabbi Gerson also pointed out that the CRC "actually states that children have the right to family life." It says, "Children deserve protection that honors their developmental needs and vulnerabilities." This is reinforced in Article 7-1, which states that a child shall "as far as possible [have] the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents." This suggests that governments must protect and support the rights of parents to protect, provide for, and educate their children.

The next speaker, **Ms. Katy Faust**, expanded on the idea that children have a right to their family. Ms. Faust is the author of "Pro-Child Politics: Why Every Cultural, Economic, and National Issue Is a Matter of Justice for Children" and "Them Before Us: Why We Need a Global Children's Rights Movement." She is founder and president of Them Before Us, a global movement defending children's right to their mother and father.

Ms. Faust referred to the CRC foundational statement, Article 18: "States shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child," pointing out that "both parents" can only mean the mother and father.

Ms. Faust explained that she is an adoptive mother, and knows that in some cases adoption can save children from living in developmentally damaging conditions. However, she stressed the preponderance of data indicating that children raised by their biological parents are better protected from harm and abuse, are more secure in their sense of identity, and are more likely to thrive in their education, social relationships, emotional health, career, and as parents themselves.

Research suggests that biologically related parents and children share a greater sense of mutual commitment to care for and love each other, at 80-85%, compared to 56-60% between stepchildren and their parents.

Ms. Faust pointed out, "It is very difficult for a child to answer the question, "Who am I?" if they cannot answer, "Whose Am I?" Of sperm-donor conceived children, 81% report wondering about their personality and physical traits. It is well-documented that on average adoptive mothers and fathers provide more educational, financial, and time investment in their children than biological parents, yet 94% of adoptees still wonder about the biological roots of their personality. This natural need to know one's parental origins is recognized in CRC Article 9, which encourages family reunification when possible.

Ms. Faust described hormonal, physiological, and reproductive differences contributing to mothers' and fathers' different parenting traits. While mothers tend to manage care, focus on safety, maintain regimes, give empathy, use simplified language, and encourage fine motor skill development, fathers tend to be the fun parent, encourage risk taking, gross motor development, and expansion of vocabulary. The complementarity of these sex-based tendencies offer children substantial benefits in their development. Faust noted that many children raised without one biological parent experience "mother or father hunger," with psychological impacts leading to need-driven poor behavioral choices.

In summary, Ms. Faust said that adults have the responsibility to put a vulnerable, dependent child's core needs first. This runs counter to the popular "resilient children" attitude today that, as she attests, often fosters angry pushback. Children's natural and fundamental right to their parents mandates adults' responsibility in putting "them before us." As both speakers argued, this is the core of the CRC.