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UN General Assembly Special Session on Children

(New York) What should have been a momentous occasion for the protection of child rights turned out to be a set back, said Yvonne Terlingen, Amnesty International's representative at the UN, referring to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (UNGASS).

In a disappointing turn of events, the Outcome Document of UNGASS missed a crucial opportunity to make the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by virtually every country in the world, into the framework for all future work of the UN on children. Instead the document does no more than acknowledge the Convention's existence.

"It is highly ironic that the Outcome Document which sets the promotion of healthy lives of children as one of its key priorities, does not call for a halt to the execution of child offenders," stated Ms Terlingen.

In particular, Amnesty International is concerned that the Outcome Document does not rule out the death penalty for children because of obstruction by the USA -- a government that described itself during the Special Session as "the global leader in child protection". It is sad that the EU did not achieve a stronger text to reflect its strong opposition to the execution of juvenile offenders.

"When it comes to protecting children's right to life, there should be no trade-off," declared Ms Terlingen.

Somalia's decision to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a welcome commitment to the protection of children's rights. The Somali government also stated its intention to ratify such instrument in the near future. The USA will then be the only country to have failed to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

"The USA will be exposed as the only country in the world not willing to fully commit to protecting children's rights," said Ms Terlingen.

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