



**Statement directed to
the Global Child Labour Conference - The Hague, 10-11 May, 2010**

We raise our voices

as the Latin American and Caribbean Working Children and Adolescents Movement to **protest** the disrespect shown to us by the organizers of the Hague Conference by neglecting to invite us to participate, or indeed, even informing of us that it would take place.

MOLACNATS

,for more than 30 years, has been a place where working girls, boys and adolescents have organized themselves to implement collective action to protect and promote the rights of all girls, boys and adolescents. This activity revolves especially around our fight for social, cultural, political, and economic recognition as well as creating working and living conditions in dignity for working children, as well as for recognition of children in general as both subjects and social actors under the law.

It is unacceptable

that we, the legitimate representatives of organized working girls, boys and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean, were not invited to the conference since the subjects under discussion are parts of our reality. The exclusive attendance by adults, most of whom are quite distant from the realities of our lives, once again confirms that the approach taken to working children and adolescents continues to be adult-centered and child and adolescent participation is relegated to lofty intentions and legal texts.

We condemn the violation of our right to participate as children and adolescents as accorded under Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly given the observations and recommendations made by the Geneva Committee on the importance of complying with this article.

For more than 30 years,

our movement has defended its firm position to fight and denounce labor exploitation of millions of children throughout the world, while at the same time fully rejecting ILO Conventions C. 138, on minimum working age, and remaining critical and opposed to Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labor and its IPEC Program:

- As regards C. 138,

- ❖ **We consider** the minimum working age to be discriminatory, excluding minors younger than 14. This convention condemns thousands of girls and boys to the illegal and informal sectors, thus greatly exposing them to exploitation.
- As regards C. 182,
 - ❖ which considers the use, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution, the production of pornography or for pornographic performances, or the use of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production or trafficking of drugs as the worst forms of child labor, **we believe** that these are criminal offenses and flagrant violations of a child's human rights. We are clearly against all of these phenomena, but calling them "labor" creates dangerous confusion and leads to purely repressive practices as opposed to truly liberating alternatives.

Serious consequences

Our movement already has clearly made its presence felt in the Amsterdam and Oslo C.182 preparatory conferences (1997) where it drew attention to the negative implications C.182 would have on the lives of thousands of working girls, boys and adolescents. Its ratification has given way to the development of repressive policies in some of our countries that criminalize the social, cultural, and economic reality of many of our families. Unending raids, persecution and stigmatization of child and adolescent labor in the popular classes of countries like Colombia, Peru, Paraguay and Guatemala, are clear and regrettable examples of the effects of these "hard-line" policies.

The lack of objectivity

shown by these international organizations, who continue to deny our dignity with statements such as : "*Child labor is a development obstacle*" or "*None of the main Millennium Development Goals can be achieved without eradicating the worst forms of child labor*". **Statements of this kind conceal the real reasons for economic, social, and political crises that our people have historically suffered as a consequence of the neoliberal economic model** which is condemning millions of girls, boys and adolescents to poverty, marginalization and exclusion. The next Hague conference will be a space where this hypothesis will be given just that much more momentum.

We propose

from our organizing spaces, as working children and adolescents who know the reality of working children in Latin America and the Caribbean, to contribute and propose work-education programs which would train us both as producers and citizens.

We demand:

- to be recognized as social actors, political and economic subjects by international organizations and society in general. (and to be invited

immediately to participate in the discussions and drafting sessions of the next Hague conference).

- to be considered while public policy which could affect us is being drawn up.
- For our input to always be sought so that social policies can be implemented with a holistic perspective and in a way which favors development of our capacities and skills to overcome the exclusion and marginalization we face in many countries in the Global South.
- For governments to spend on education, health care, food, recreation and protecting the environment, instead of prioritizing payment on foreign debt.
- For our proposals to be listened to and considered for an economic system of solidarity where our social relationships and production take place without undermining human dignity and while protecting the environment and promoting solidarity among peoples.

We call upon

labor, peasant, indigenous, Afro-descendant, student, women, and intellectual organizations as well as progressive world governments to show solidarity to our call and not submit to international organizations and their power grabs with programs and policies that while covered with a varnish of good intentions, only propagate a system which exploits human beings .

We once again demand

our recognition as working children and adolescent so as to achieve the wish expressed by a working child:

“We want to make it possible for children to be happy and walk hand in hand with adults and everyone in society to make this world a big house where we all belong”

**Yes to work in dignity, no to exploitation!
Yes to equality, no to discrimination!
Yes to protected work, no to abuse and mistreatment!**

April 2010