



All children have one thing in common – their human rights.

Twenty-five years ago, the world made a promise to all its children. When leaders adopted the **Convention on the Rights of the Child on November 20, 1989**, they committed to do everything in their power to promote and protect children's rights.

Great progress has been achieved since the Convention was adopted. However, looking back on 25 years of progress reminds us what is still left to do.

Far fewer children now die before their fifth birthdays than 25 years ago. But in 2012, some **6.6 million children under 5 years of age died, mostly from preventable causes, depriving them of their fundamental right to survive and develop.**

Every child has the right to an education, and more children are now realizing that right – but 57 million girls and boys of primary age are still out of school.

Even though we are making progress, too many children's lives are still determined by where they are born, how much money their family makes, or what social or ethnic group they belong to.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the rights that must be realized for children to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse. It reflects a new vision of the child. They are human beings and have their own rights. The Convention offers a vision of the child as an individual and as a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development.

The Convention and its acceptance by almost every country in the world has heightened recognition of the fundamental human dignity of all children and the urgency of ensuring their well-being and development. **The Convention makes clear the idea that a basic quality of life should be the right of all children, rather than a privilege enjoyed by a few.**

Despite the existence of rights, children still suffer from poverty, homelessness, abuse, neglect, preventable diseases, unequal access to education and justice systems that do not recognize their special needs. These are problems that occur in both industrialized and developing countries – including the United States.

All children have the same rights!

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely and rapidly ratified human rights treaty in history. Only two countries, Somalia and the United States, have not ratified this celebrated agreement.

The Convention changed the way children are viewed and treated – i.e., as human beings with a distinct set of rights. The unprecedented acceptance of the Convention clearly shows a wide global commitment to advancing children’s rights. There is much to celebrate as we mark the 25th anniversary of the Convention on November 20, from declining infant mortality to rising school enrollment, but much remains to be done. Too many children still do not enjoy their full rights. The world needs new ideas and approaches, and the Convention must become a guiding document for every human being in every nation.

(Excerpts from UNICEF)

What is the current status of US ratification?

As US ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright signed the Convention on behalf of the United States in February 1995. However, no US president then or since has submitted the treaty to the US Senate for its advice and consent. In early 2009, the State Department initiated an interagency review of the Convention, but no further action has been taken.

In the United States, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has jurisdiction over international human rights treaties. After approval by the Committee, treaties are forwarded to the full Senate for advice and consent, where they require a two-thirds majority vote for ratification.

Why hasn't the US ratified the Convention?

US laws are largely in compliance with the Convention. However, vocal critics claim that the Convention is “anti-family” and will undermine the rights of American parents. They have actively campaigned against ratification of the Convention.

What has the Obama administration said about the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

When asked about the Convention during a presidential debate in 2008, candidate Senator Obama said that “It’s embarrassing to find ourselves in the company of Somalia, a lawless land.” He pledged to review the Convention and other treaties to ensure that the United States “resumes its global leadership in human rights.” President Obama has not sent the CRC to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for required review.

(Human Rights Watch: Q&A on the CRC, 2009)