



NEWS RELEASE

Teen girls prompt United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child to question Canada on climate change

September 27, 2012

GENEVA AND VANCOUVER – Two Canadian teen girls are creating a stir in Geneva this week, capturing the ear of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child by linking Canada’s failed record on climate change to children’s human rights.

During Canada’s review, committee members from Norway and Chile picked up the girls’ message and pressed Canada about its lack of response to climate change, citing Canada as a major producer of greenhouse gas emissions. Some of their questions quoted directly from the girls’ submissions.

Zoe Craig, 15, of the Musqueam Nation in B.C., urged the Child Rights Committee to treat climate change as a critical threat to children and demanded that children have input into Canadian climate change policies. “My inherent right to life, and my right to culture as an Indigenous person, are being jeopardized not only by climate change but by my country’s lack of environmental standards and policies,” she said. “Canada must give children a say in environmental policy.”

Rekha Dhillon-Richardson told the Children’s Rights Committee that she is stunned by the failure of her government: “As a 13-year-old girl, I can understand why children’s rights are needed, because they apply to me and others I know,” she said. “Canada’s refusal to address the significance of environmental protection astonishes me because climate change is an urgent problem affecting children’s immediate and long-term future.”

The girls met during a joint internship with Justice for Girls and the David Suzuki Foundation, and were inspired by Severn Cullis-Suzuki’s famous speech at the 1992 Rio Summit.

“Climate change threatens every human right enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, starting with the most fundamental – the right to life,” said David Suzuki Foundation communications specialist Panos Grames. “It also cascades through housing, food, shelter, education and the right to equality. As such, Canada’s subversion of international negotiations to control climate change undermines the most basic human rights for children around the world.”

Justice for Girls director Asia Czapska is thrilled to see the United Nations Child Rights Committee listening and responding to the girls. “These young women are more than capable of speaking to human rights issues,” she said. “They have pointed out a critical link between

children's human rights and climate change, and this committee is clearly taking them seriously."

Canada is under review by the Committee on the Rights of the Child at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, September 26 and 27.

-- END --

Justice for Girls is a Canadian NGO, established in 1999 and based in Vancouver, that promotes support, justice and equality for teenage girls who have experienced violence and live in poverty. www.justiceforgirls.org

Link to UN submission from Zoe Craig and Rekha Dhillon-Richardson (PDF):

http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/ngos/Canada_Justice_for-Girls_CRC61.pdf

For a photo of Zoe Craig and Rekha Dhillon-Richardson at the UN, email Ian Hanington: ihanington@davidsuzuki.org