



ADDRESS BY BRISSA VILLA

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Good morning to you all.

I am Brissa Villa and this is Santiago Cardona and we are members of the ICBF's Children's Advisory and Consultative Council in Colombia.

I should like to begin by saying that I am proud to be Colombian, that this country, despite all that we lack, works harder and harder for children and adolescents every day and that is what motivates me to continue believing that we can be better and that we can continue to fight and assert our rights.

Our country's greatest challenges include poverty, inequity and differences, discrimination and much more. The education system also has much that must improve; often medications are not easy to obtain or hospitals are not easily accessible. To help in this, for example, we should try to make them more accessible for those who are struggling, with more areas for care and more medication for families that need it. But as not everything can be bad, I would also like to tell you about the things that we as a country have achieved; for example, we should note that programmes for children from 0 to 5 have provided the possibility of caring for those children comprehensively; in addition, public education is free and helps children to complete their school cycle, mega-schools are inspiring and also give children and adolescents with disabilities the opportunity to gain access to them.

The Generation E programme of the Ministry of Education will allow many young people access to higher education; we have more play areas and parks for children and adolescents, because every minute that a child or adolescent spends playing and sharing is a minute away from drugs and bad decisions. We have more areas for sports and art, for children to enjoy and experience those lessons that are tools for their future.

Being here today on behalf of the children and adolescents of Colombia and being the spokesperson who must bring to the table everything we think about, but which we are often silent about, fills me with hope and motivates me to keep asking myself, what is my role in all of this? And I realize that since we started getting children and adolescents to give their opinions and listening to them or having a spokesperson and giving them access to the people in charge, so that they can talk about and express their ideas for improvement, a great deal can be achieved. That is why I am here, with my fellow members of the Children's Advisory and Consultative Council of Colombia, and the ideas of thousands of children; all looking for a better future and present.

Thank you for allowing us to be part of this Congress; we hope that there will continue to be opportunities for us because we know that with your support, we can reach the future we deserve.