

Inter American Children's Institute (IIN)



CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE



Organization of
American States

Newsletter N° 16, 2014



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General Assembly declares the **21st Pan American Child Congress as Inter-American** Specialized Conference.

In June 2014, the 44th General Assembly of the OAS, adopted the resolution AG/Res 2836 (XLIV-0/14) XXI PAN AMERICAN CHILD CONGRESS, which “...Declares the XXI Pan American Child Congress an inter-American specialized conference”.

This resolution was sponsored by Brazil, which generously offered to host the 21st Pan American Congress, in December of this year in Brasilia.



The Pan American Congress is a body of the Inter-American Children’s Institute (IIN), which meets every five years with the purpose of promoting sharing of experience and knowledge, in specialized subjects, among the member states of the Inter-American System, in order to establish a regional agenda for the promotion and protection of children in the Americas and the Caribbean.

While the Pan-American Congress is the highest political body of IIN-OAS, the declaration of Inter-American Specialized Conference, is especially relevant because it elevates the character of this important event that brings together the highest childhood and adolescence authorities in the region, thus making it a forum with an even higher political and technical profile.

The title of this Congress is: “Childhood: building environments of peace.”

“Childhood: Building Peaceful Environments”

With the purpose of promoting sharing of experience and knowledge, in addition to making recommendations that will foster children’s well-being in the Americas, the member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) are planning to meet in Brasilia, Brazil, for the 21st Pan American Child Congress, to be held from 10 to 12 December 2014.

The key subject will be violence against children: “Childhood: Building Peaceful Environments”.

As the Secretary General of the OAS, José Miguel Insulza, has put it: “...our continent is one of the youngest, with the lowest average age, there is a great deal of youth, which is our principal source of wealth and will continue to be so in the future.”

It is intended that the 21st Pan American Congress should focus on efforts to apply the Convention on the Rights of the Child and follow up on the recommendations of the World Report on Violence against Children.

No form of violence against children is justifiable and all forms of violence are preventable.

This is obviously not a new or unknown problem, but it is also unfortunate that while some forms of extreme violence awaken indignation and social condemnation, there are numerous forms of daily violence that tend to be tolerated and even justified by adults.



In sum, the defence and promotion of child rights is a key responsibility for the OAS, as there is no sure way of fulfilling its basic tasks without investing in this representative sector of the region.

In this way, the Congress will focus on three core issues:

✿ **Violence against children. “Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: building peaceful environments”.**

✿ **Juveniles in conflict with the law and criminal liability systems.**

✿ **The sexual exploitation of children.**

The two latter scenarios involving violence are referred to in the Action Plan of the Inter-American Children’s Institute (IIN-OAS)



The **89th Meeting of the Directing Council of the IIN-OAS** will be held prior to the Congress, leading up to three days' work which will include conferences, expert panels and presentations by the States, providing many opportunities for discussion and reflection.

The objective is to issue a unified resolution, which will establish proposals and guidelines in support of the States, so that they may continue working on behalf of child rights in the region, within the framework of the issues addressed during the 21st Pan American Child Congress.

The **II Pan American Child Forum** will also take place during the Congress. This provides an opportunity for the children of the region to give their opinions on the thoughts and decisions agreed by the senior

authorities on childhood who are meeting at the Congress.

A **civil society forum** will also be held prior to the main event, with the participation of well-known international agencies and with the purpose of generating recommendations for the consideration of the national delegations and authorities, in preparation for the 21st Congress. This will take place in an atmosphere of discussion and consensus with officials from State institutions and the IIN-OAS, for the promotion and protection of child rights.



Participants will include:

- ✓ Head of delegation
- ✓ Alternate delegates
- ✓ Technical consultants who specialize in childhood
- ✓ Adolescents between twelve and seventeen years of age
- ✓ Special guests
- ✓ Childhood experts
- ✓ Civil society organizations will also be present as observers

Building Peaceful Environments: a Challenge for the States

At the 21st Pan American Child Congress, attempts will be made to strengthen and enhance a number of activities that will help us to build peaceful environments as a strategic challenge in the complex process of moving towards a culture that respects diversity and uses the best interest of the child as one of its guiding principles.

Some of these challenges are the following

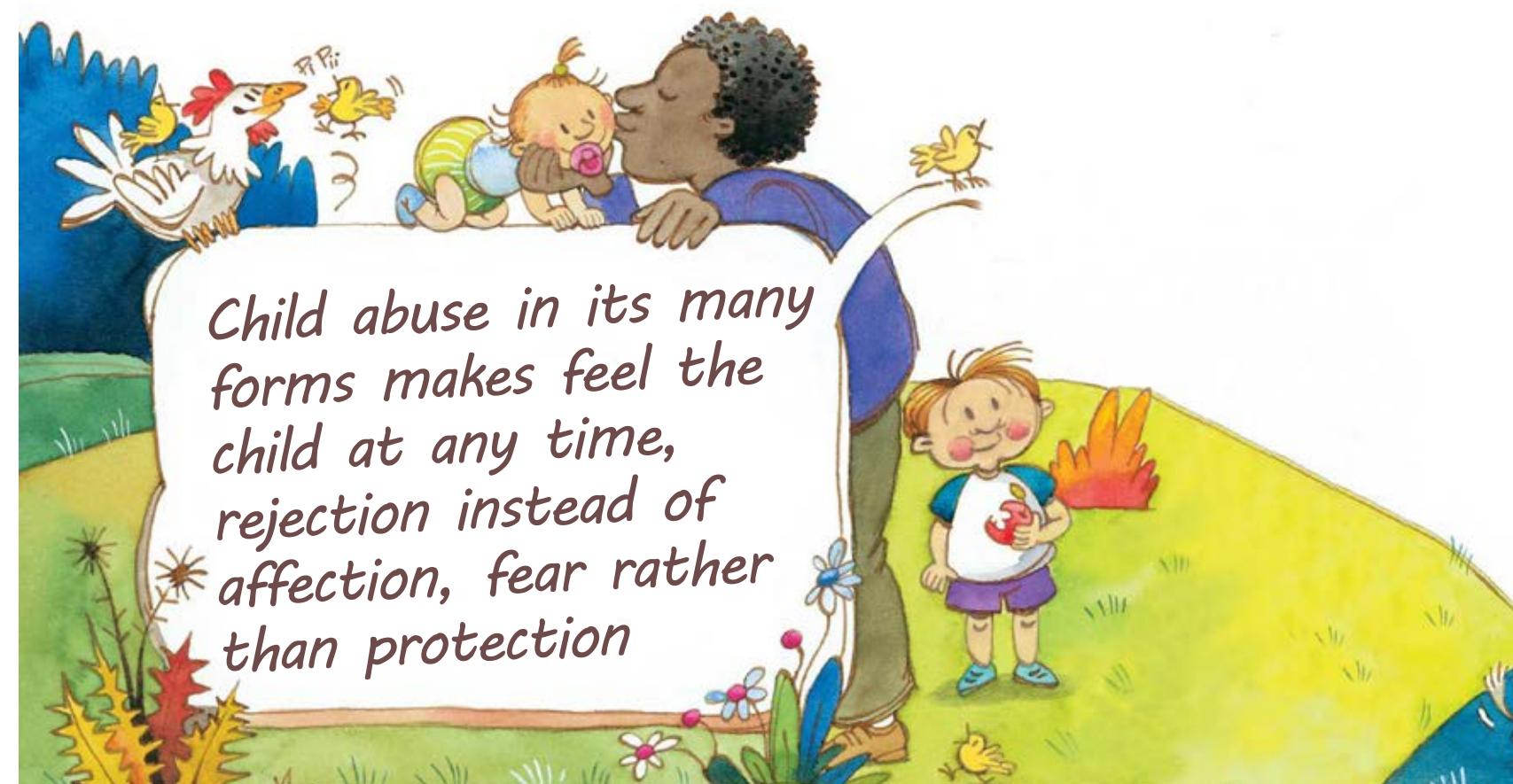
1. Make it possible for the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

to permeate cultures and be expressed in the environments in which children are born and raised.

2. Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution, ensuring safety and the value of respecting the dignity of individuals from the beginning of life.

3. Achieve on the harmonization of each country's domestic legal framework with the rules of the Convention.

4. Develop effective and sustainable public policies for



children that can achieve an impact on their living conditions over prolonged periods.

5. Reduce inequity gaps and reverse the process of exclusion so that new generations have a clear path to social integration, promoting values related to work, social responsibility and participation.

6. Open opportunities for participation and intergenera-

tional discussion where children can be heard and evolve from being "problem children" to being participants in the search for solutions.

7. Eliminate exploitation, particularly the "worst forms of child labour", sexual exploitation, and participation in organized crime, and develop programmes for the comprehensive restitution of rights with a view to full social inclusion.

8. Break the circle of violence, particularly as regards criminal violence and punishment, promoting alternatives to deprivation of liberty in the case of offences, in order to develop the potential of juveniles and refrain from strengthening their links to criminal organizations.

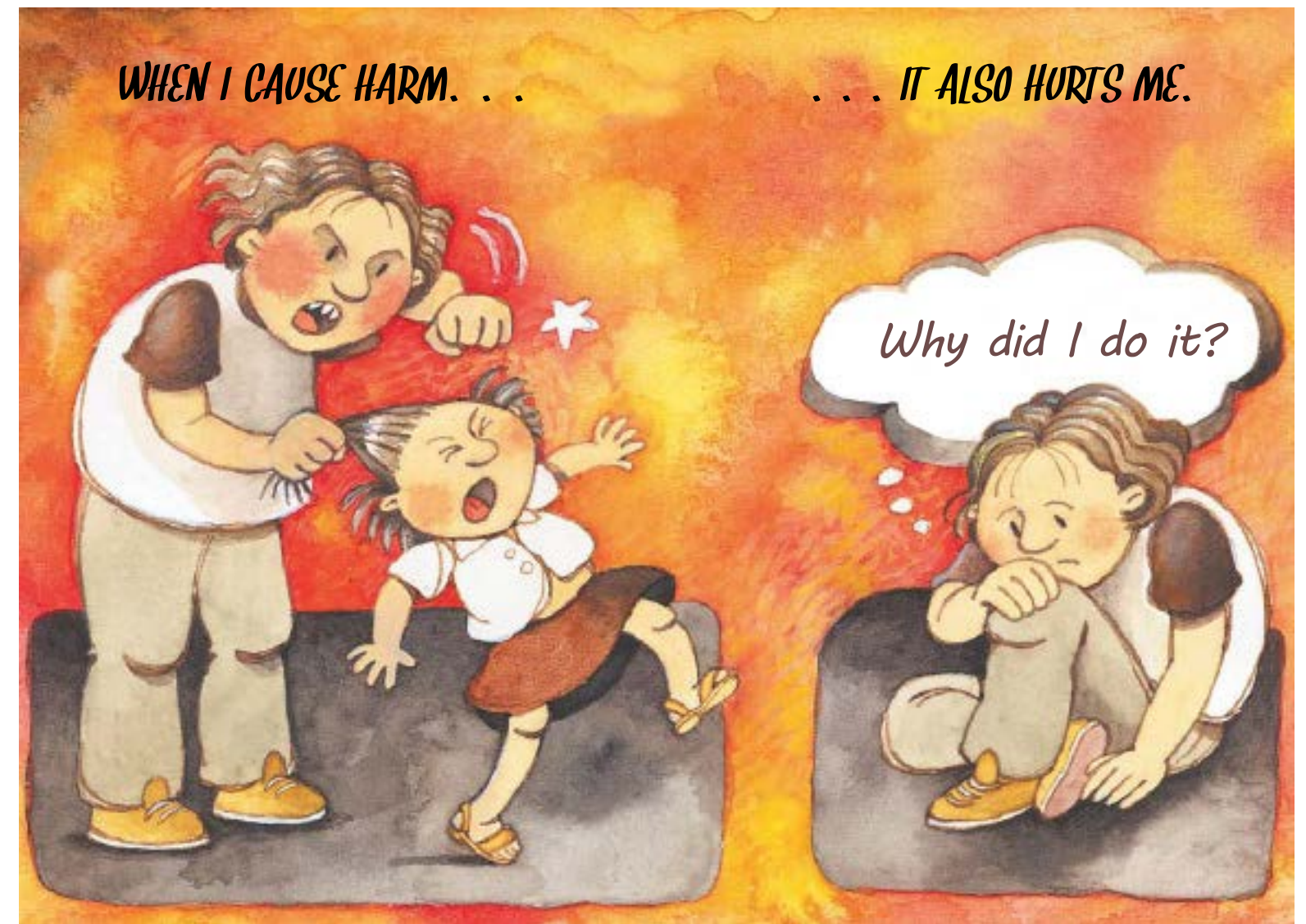
9. Establish public budgets and private resources in order to ensure the sustainability of existing and future plans, programmes, projects and activities, and increase them every budget year.

10. Strengthen coordination among public and private bodies in order to en-

sure improved cooperation and synchronization within the framework of a National Protection System and provide correspondence, coherence and social cohesion in the satisfaction of the catalogue of child rights.

In this context, the Inter-American Children's Institute, as the

specialized OAS body for children's policies, anticipates that the 21st Pan American Congress will constitute an opportunity for reflection and the collective construction of proposals to contribute to the difficult, but unavoidable purpose of making the Americas a place where child rights are respected and protected.



Twenty-Five Years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): Building Peaceful Environments

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) on 20 November 1989, introduced a new paradigm: to transform children's place in society by designing, issuing, executing, monitoring and evaluating public policies in every State.

Today, 25 years after that historic event, both the States and civil society have made significant progress in many aspects. However, an analysis of the harsh social realities of the hemisphere and the institutional policies that at-

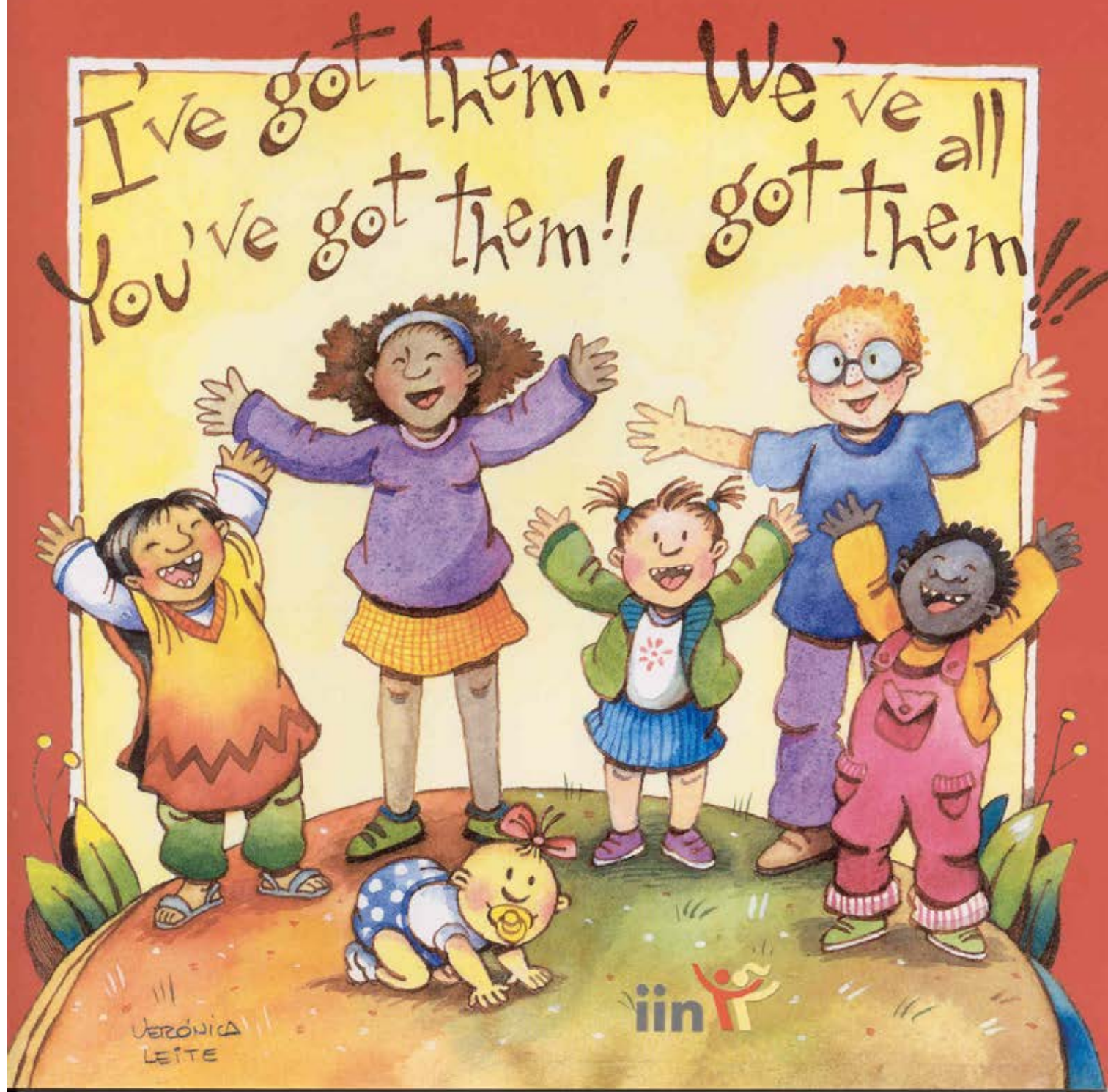
tempt to revert them shows an evident gap between regulations and the level of genuine realization of the rights of children in the continent.

“What is the CRC’s approach to the “right to non-violence”?”

In its Article 19, the Convention stipulates that: States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treat-



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ment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

To comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 21st Pan American Congress will seek to underscore the following decisions made by the States:

- * The enactment of laws that prohibit the corporal punishment of children, particularly in family, educational and institutional settings.

- * The implementation of inter-sectorally coordinated reference and care systems to allow the provision of effective and appropriate responses to the diversity of situations which violate the rights of children.

- * Awareness-raising campaigns that tend to revert the justification of violence as way to resolve conflict.

- * The promotion of opportunities for child-related participation and listening in political and administrative, as well as communal, decision-making settings.

- * Actions to underpin the role played by families as children's primary socialization environment.

- * Pointing out to the mass media the significant social function that they should perform in order to prevent violence.

There has undoubtedly been progress in this matter; nonetheless, the prevalence of violence against children continues to be high throughout the hemisphere.

Juveniles in Conflict with the Law and Criminal Liability Systems

The importance of developing and strengthening issues related to juvenile criminal liability and specialized juvenile justice systems for adolescent offenders should be put before the principal forums of analysis of the States in the region.

The 21st Pan American Child Congress will be an ideal opportunity to promote reflection on the development and implementation of specialized justice that safeguards the comprehensive protection of children, particularly by means of familiarity with

and the application of non-custodial penalties and alternative and early termination measures in criminal proceedings as forms of dejudicialization.

In view of this, the following points in relation to these issues will be addressed at the 21st Congress:

- * Preventing children from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.
- * Protecting children from all forms of violence in the juvenile justice system and integrating

this dimension into the national agenda.

- * Ensuring the use of diversion and alternative non-custodial measures as priorities within the juvenile justice system.

- * Ensuring that deprivation of liberty is a measure of last resort.

- * Enhancing effective coordination mechanisms and cooperation between different services in charge of law enforcement, justice and social welfare.



The Sexual Exploitation of Children (SEC)

Further to the resolution CD/RES.10 (82-R/07). SEC is one of the most flagrant violations of children's rights, to the point that its existence brings into question the very dignity of our societies.

Child victims of SEC have a history of violated rights from the earliest days of their lives. This reinforces the idea that the objective when eradicating the problem should not be limited to saving or removing them from the situation that preceded ex-

ploitation, but should include working on the full enjoyment of their rights.

In recent decades, developments have occurred within the international community related to enshrining and safeguarding the rights of children, together with the emergence of new forms of this old problem.

It is proposed that the 21st Congress should not be an isolated event, but part of a movement towards protecting rights, as



well as achieving the expression of these matters in the National Plans of the States, against SEC.

Work will be reaffirmed on the following focal points: prevention, restitution, integration and penalties for the adults responsible for these crimes.

Analysis of developments and gaps in legal frameworks.

Intersectoral coordination and cooperation between States in the fight against SEC.

Strategies for prevention and the restitution of rights.

The Inter-American Cooperation Programme for the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Exploitation, and Smuggling of and Trafficking in Children, CD/RES.10 (82-R/07).

II Pan American Child Forum

During the 21st Pan American Child Congress there will also be opportunities for the children of the region to give their opinions with regard to the thoughts and decisions agreed among the most senior authorities on childhood who are meeting at the Congress.

The 2nd Pan American Child Forum will take place in Brasilia, Brazil, from 9 to 12 December. This Forum seeks to encourage the free, meaningful, genuine, leadership and decision-making participation of children, as well

as providing tools for them to learn to express themselves in their families, schools, communities and before bodies that implement public policies on their behalf.

Specific objectives are:

- ✳ To review the agreements reached and the expectations created at the I Inter-American Forum: promote child participation in the daily decisions that affect families, schools and institutions.

- ✳ To develop the sharing of proposals and experiences that may lead to stronger ways to enable children's voices to be heard and taken into account in the States' plans, programmes and policies related to the eradication of all forms of violence.

- ✳ To consolidate an Inter-American network to encourage links, communication, information and sharing between groups of chil-

dren in the different countries in the continent.

- ✳ To listen to the opinions of children (assessment and recommendations) 25 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- ✳ To include the work arising from the 2nd Pan American Child Forum among the conclusions of the 21st Congress.



2nd Forum of Civil Society Organizations

The OAS provides a special place for the intervention of civil society in its activities. Article 26 of its Democratic Charter states that “The OAS will consult and cooperate on an ongoing basis with member states and take into account the contributions of civil society organizations [...]”.

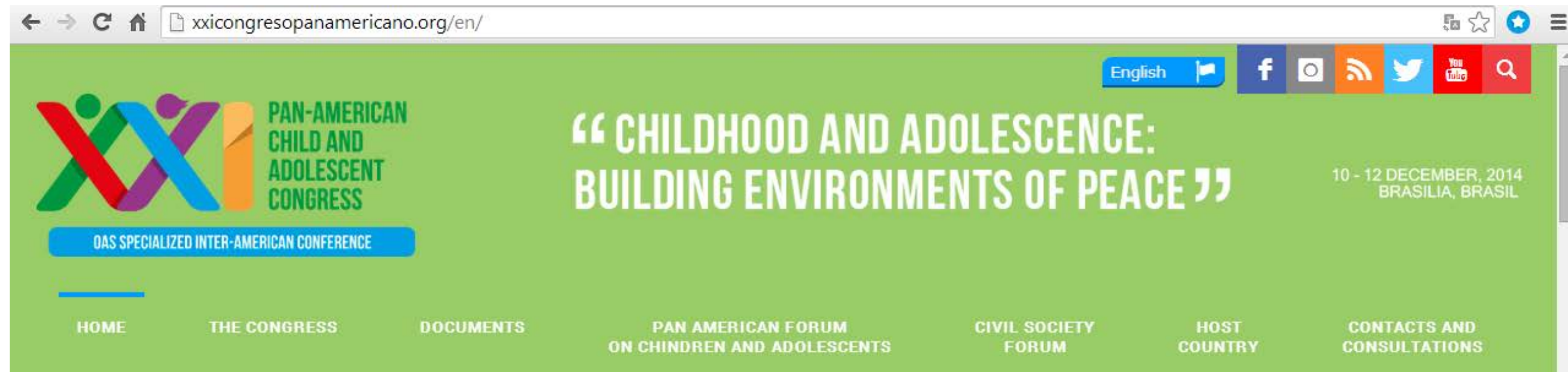
In prior to the 21st Congress, a forum will be held with non-governmental organizations and IIN and OAS authorities, bearing in mind that the experience and contributions of civil society can enhance the development and promotion of child-related issues.

This meeting will have the following objectives:

- ✿ To generate discussion and recommendations for the consideration of country delegations and authorities in preparation for the 21st Pan American Child Congress.
- ✿ Increase and maintain the presence, participation and involvement of civil society organizations in the promotion of children’s issues on the Inter-American agenda.



For more information about the **XXI Pan American Child Congress, American Children**, visit our page.
<http://xxicongresopanamericano.org/en>



21ST PAN AMERICAN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT CONGRESS

The key subject of the 21st Pan American Child and Adolescent Congress will be violence against children, under the title: "Childhood: Building Peaceful Environments".



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