

## **APA Resolution on UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention's Optional Protocols**

WHEREAS psychologists have ethical duties to promote human dignity and welfare;

WHEREAS the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a comprehensive policy framework for the protection of the dignity of children;

WHEREAS research shows that ratification of the Convention frequently leads to governments' thoughtful review of policies affecting children and to the formation of coalitions of organizations interested in the well-being of children;

WHEREAS the Convention provides for the establishment of systems to monitor the well-being of children in diverse contexts;

WHEREAS psychologists may contribute to the development and enhancement of such systems for data collection and analysis;

WHEREAS psychologists may also contribute to the design and evolution of structures for children's participation in their communities and of programs to enhance respectful service delivery for children and their families;

WHEREAS the Convention recognizes children's right to a family environment and provides support as a matter of human right for the protection of relationships critical to children's healthy development;

WHEREAS the Convention shows due respect for cultural differences in children's lives and for gender equity in resources available to children;

WHEREAS the Convention provides a framework for humane educational, health, mental health, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems;

WHEREAS psychologists can contribute to an understanding of the nature of, and requisites for, children's sense of dignity;

WHEREAS psychologists can also contribute to the design of systems to ensure children's survival and to promote their healthy development;

WHEREAS the American Psychological Association (APA) has declared the development of a national strategy for the protection of children to be "a matter of the highest urgency";

WHEREAS the United States has signed the Convention but is the only country in the world with a working government that has not ratified the Convention;

WHEREAS APA in 1989 endorsed the "spirit and principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provided that the language is not used to limit freedom of reproductive choice";

WHEREAS the *travaux préparatoires* (drafting history) of the Convention clarify that such a limitation is not addressed or supported by the Convention;

WHEREAS scores of other national professional, civic, and religious organizations have endorsed US ratification of the Convention;

WHEREAS optional protocols to the Convention -- on involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution, and pornography – were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000;

WHEREAS the United States was one of the first countries to sign these protocols;

WHEREAS psychologists abhor the sexual exploitation of children and the targeting of children in armed conflict and recognize the trauma and degradation often experienced by children in such situations;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that APA reaffirms its support for the spirit and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and calls on the U.S. Senate to ratify it with due urgency;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA affirms its support for the optional protocols to the Convention and calls on the U.S. Senate to ratify them with due urgency;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, until the Senate ratifies the Convention and its protocols, states and municipalities should adopt the principles in the Convention as guides to their own policies and practices affecting children;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA encourages state psychological associations to advocate such action by state legislatures, city and county councils, and state and local school boards;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that APA should apply the principles in the Convention in its own work related to children;

THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED that the APA Committee on International Relations in Psychology shall establish and appoint a working group to examine the implications of the principles in the Convention for psychologists' practice, research, education, and advocacy.

Approved by the APA Council of Representatives February, 2001