

Transcript: Rima Salah, PhD, Chair of the Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC) and Volunteer Faculty at the Child Study Centre, Yale University, and H.E. Mr. Horacio Sevilla, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations

Rima Salah: I am also grateful for the presence and participation of Under Secretary General, Leila Zerroughi, a tireless advocate for the rights and protection of children affected by armed conflict. I thank you all, your presence is a testimony of your commitment to the well-being of displaced children, the youngest among them and their families. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, we are meeting ten days after witnessing the United Nations triumph of the adoption of the New York declaration for refugees and migrants. The declaration points the way forward for responding to the multitude of challenges, facing the families of refugees and migrants. However, it is critical to remember that a large number of refugee and migrants are children. According to the latest UNICEF publication entitled Uprooted, “50 million children have migrated across borders or have forcibly been misplaced. The shocking number of 28 million people have been uprooted due to conflict, violence, and insecurity.”

Ladies and gentlemen, many of you present here are exerting all efforts to stop the trauma of children, to alleviate the pain and suffering of children and families. Most importantly, to realize the rights of children because migrant and refugee also have rights. Today we have with us, a very eminent and distinguished panel to tell us about the transformative power of early childhood development to protect young children, their parents, their caretakers, and their communities from the consequences of war, violent conflicts and displacements as well as how to build cohesive communities. Also, engaging with communities with children and with families, not only as victims, but as agents of change and peace.

The Early Childhood Peace Consortium and all of our partners want to join forces with the international community, with all of you, to create an inclusive movement for the culture of peace through the transformative power of early childhood development. It is only by moving forward together that we can change the tide of violence. What we need, ladies and gentlemen, is unfailing visions and unwavering commitment as well as a strong partnership for children. Children cannot wait, the time is now and let's do it all together. Thank you very much.

And now, I have the pleasure and honor to present to you his excellency, Ambassador Horacio Sevilla Borja. He is a career diplomat from the Ecuadorian Foreign Service prior to his appointment as a representative to Ecuador at the United Nations. He served as the

ambassador to Brazil, Germany, Peru, Argentina, and the Dominican Republic. He was also very involved in human rights, he is an advocate for human rights. So, Ambassador Borja, the floor is yours for any introductory remarks.

H.E. Mr. Horacio Sevilla: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. In this moment, we are facing one of the largest movements of migrants and refugees in history. We are pleased to sponsor this event together with permanent mission of Bangladesh. This meeting allows us to share our experiences and perspectives about the transformative power of early childhood development action in immigration and refugee situations. My special recognition to the work of Ambassador Chowdhury, Founder of the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace, for helping organize this event in conjunction with the Early Childhood Development Peace Consortium and Yale University. Ecuador considers the degree of development of early childhood as a main priority in the development model. In the last decade, our government has invested and designed public policies to achieve full childhood development, particularly to those from disadvantaged households.

Early childhood development is one of the most ambitious strategies to reduce poverty and inequality gaps in my country. The Ecuadorian government has worked on the improvement of social services and on eliminating barriers that have existed to access them. This has been achieved thanks to the investment of this social area, and has never before in our history, given comprehensive care from conception, providing to the newborn's access to renovative health.

We believe that the real investment and priority in children starts when they are in their mother's womb and in its first years of life. The priority of early childhood development not only brings social (wasn't able to understand this word), but also represents savings in providing long term services. If all are invested in the early age formation of our little kids, we'll enable the motor development of their intellectual and physical skills and we will represent not only the opportunity to create a future for themselves, but also a better future for the whole country.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ecuador is a country in Latin America and the Caribbean region with the largest number of refugees in recent years. More than 60,000 people have been affected by the status of refugees and the full enjoyment of human rights. If we calculate the population of having 15 million inhabitants, there are nearly one million refugees. All children in Ecuador, regardless of their immigration status, have access to education, health, and other public services because our constitution establishes equality between in foreigners and natives. Immigration, as we all know, is a multidimensional reality. We work on initiatives to promote opportunities (...) on the present issue at large, the refugees and

migrants in the world. We hope that the commitments made with the declaration of New York for refugees and migrants will support the efforts and willingness of all countries who are collectively and in solidarity with all the people in situations of mobility, especially protecting the human rights of all refugees and migrant children (...) of the superior interest of the child, avoiding negative neurological (?) consequences for all of the children in this difficult situation of refuge and of violence and war in their communities.

The rights of children to achieve their full potential must not be undermined by the immigration status. The migrant refugee status should not deprive them of fulfilling early childhood development. We are here listening to our distinguished experts and to learn more on how to be with this present issue for (...). Thank you very much.