



40th Session of the HRC  
Geneva, 28 February 2019  
Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur  
on the situation of HRDs  
Speaker: Neomi Thijs

Oral statement submitted by  
**IIMA – Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice**  
And co-signed by  
**VIDES International – International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development**

Thank you, Mister President.

IIMA and VIDES International welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights defenders, focusing on women and girls.

We also commend reference made to the 2018 Day of General Discussion of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child devoted to protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders, given the particular challenges they face when defending their rights including the right to education and the right to a healthy environment.

In fact, children and the youth are among the most severely affected by natural disasters and environmental harm. Nevertheless, many children and young people, including those who are victims of floods and other environmental emergencies, are becoming active environmental defenders, not only to protect their communities and their homes, but because they feel the responsibility to care for it as a common good. Among them, girls and women defenders are particularly committed.

**Therefore, IIMA and VIDES call upon States to:**

- Fully recognize the critical role played by children and young people, including girls and young women, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Support children and young people in transforming their awareness into concrete actions to preserve and protect the environment
- Expand environmental programs carried out by local human rights defenders to prevent natural disasters and environmental harm
- Provide human rights education, including environmental rights and gender equality, in formal and informal education settings
- Ensure that the views of children and young people are taken into account on all matters affecting them, including the promotion and protection of the environment.

I thank you.