



UNESCO house - Paris

WORLD CONGRESS ON JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

28-30 MAY 2018

STRENGTHENING JUSTICE SYSTEMS FOR CHILDREN

AVRIL CALDER OPENING SPEECH. 28.05.19. PLENARY SESSION. ROOM 1.

Excellency Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO
Ministers,
Ambassadors,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen
Young people

On behalf of the Consortium and Organising Committee it is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you to this World Congress on *Strengthening Justice for Children* and to thank most warmly Mme Azoulay and her UNESCO colleagues for making these splendid and historic premises available for the three days of our debates and discussions.

As many of you know I am the President of the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates and this is our XIX World Congress. However, this is our Association's first venture into holding a World Congress with other organisations and I am pleased that our aims and interests have coincided and complemented each other to develop what I believe is an exciting and stimulating programme. Over the next three days we will be hearing about the many difficulties and threats that face far too many of our children and young people today. We shall also hear about many interesting and exciting developments designed to improve child justice, child protection and reintegration. How can we assess and value these proposals in the context of the society we each live in and would like to improve?

I suggest that a key is always to try to see what it is that the child or young person sees—looking outwards from his or her perspective. This is not at all an easy task. With the accelerated changes in technology and the ways technology is adapted and used, with growing inequality within many countries, rapid globalisation, never-ending armed conflict, large-scale movement of people, trafficking of people and substances, it is difficult to conceive what the child sees, what the apprehends or what the fears and what drives his or her response. To understand a child's point of view takes a lot of information, a lot of imagination and a significant capacity for empathy and the ability to listen to and hear what children and young people are saying.

L P Hartley, an English novelist, famously wrote:

The **past** is a foreign country, they do things differently there.

But it is also true that the **present** can be another country. Children and young people share the same space with us, but at the same time they live in a very different world with its own ways of doing things, rewards, threats and punishments. In order to help them, we have to try to see what they see, feel what they feel and understand what they fear. If we can do that we may be able to develop approaches and ways of doing things that will help them to be good citizens of what is, after all, the society that we all share.

It is wonderful to see so many people here in this hall. Now I am looking forward to



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three days of enlightening discussion during which I hope to meet as many of you as possible.