

# International Day of the Girl Child 2020

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"Being an Adolescent Girl  
in a Changing World"

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Conference Report

OCTOBER 11, 2020 | ISTANBUL









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The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of stylized, line-art faces of young girls. Each face has a unique hairstyle, such as pigtails, braids, or buns, often adorned with bows or flowers. The pattern is dense and covers the entire area, creating a textured, wallpaper-like effect. The color of the pattern is a light, muted red or pink, matching the overall color scheme.

# *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*





***On December 19, 2011, United Nations General Assembly declared October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child, to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world.***



*The aim of the 2020 conference was to discuss the gender-based challenges faced by women and girls in the context of emerging risks such as pandemics and climate change.*

On December 19, 2011, United Nations General Assembly declared October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child, to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world. The International Day of the Girl Child focuses attention on the need to address the challenges girls face and to promote girls' empowerment and the fulfilment of their human rights.

UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and the Aydın Doğan Foundation have been leading organizations marking this important day in Turkey to support global and national efforts with the aim of creating a world free of discrimination, exclusion, and violence against girls. This partnership has been organizing joint conferences since 2015, which addressed themes including inclusive and quality education, prevention of child marriage, the role of girls as actors of change and resilience, 'gender inequalities as invisible challenges' and girls' empowerment through science, arts and sports.

The aim of the 2020 conference was to discuss the gender-based challenges faced by women and girls in the context of emerging risks such as pandemics and climate change. International Day of the Girl Child Conference, which was held for the sixth time in 2020, was held online; as a live broadcast from studio in Istanbul through International Girl Child web site and on YouTube, for the first time due to the measures taken across the country and the world due to the COVID-19 outbreak. It was broadcast live on <https://dunyakizcocuklari.org/> and YouTube from the studio established in Istanbul. Participants, including public figures, experts, and young people, discussed new risks and opportunities brought by the rapidly changing world of 2020 for young people, and focused on how girls play a role as change agents in the face of such challenges.





*International Day of the Girl Child Conference reached nearly 700 registered participants and more than 15,000 viewers with Turkish, Arabic and English broadcasts on YouTube as a platform where girl child called for their requests to have more fair, more equal and more sustainable life.*

Organized with the motto "Empowered Girls, Empowered Future," the conference was moderated by UNFPA Turkey Goodwill Ambassador, the actress Hazal Kaya. Following the opening speeches of the representatives of the institutions, the conference hosted the Keynote Speaker Luisa Neubauer, young climate activist, and continued with two thematic panels and short film screenings in which the declarations and products of the young people were exhibited. International Day of the Girl Child Conference reached nearly 700 registered participants and more than 15,000 viewers with Turkish, Arabic and English broadcasts on YouTube as a platform where girl child called for their requests to have more fair, more equal and more sustainable life. The conference provided a platform for girls to announce their demands for a fairer, more equal, and more sustainable life. In addition, in respect to the communication activities carried out, 19.9 million people were reached through the news about the conference, contributing to wide awareness raising on adolescent girls.





# BACKGROUND





***The aim of the International Day of the Girl Child Conference was to address gendered challenges that women and girls are facing in an era of newly emerging risks, such as pandemics and climate change.***



*A particular focus was given on the ways in which adolescent girls can be agents of change in the face of the key challenges.*



The aim of the event was to address gendered challenges that women and girls are facing in an era of newly emerging risks, such as pandemics and climate change. Participants, including public figures, experts, and adolescents, discussed and showcased new risks and new opportunities that the rapidly changing world of the 2020s is bringing for adolescents. A particular focus was given on the ways in which adolescent girls can be agents of change in the face of the key challenges as detailed below.



Pandemics are known to exacerbate gender inequalities worldwide. COVID-19 is causing an unprecedented crisis that is disrupting lives, health, economies, and societies. It is not only a health crisis, but also a humanitarian and development crisis with the worst impact expected in fragile contexts, conflict settings and in vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, refugees, migrants, and people living in poverty. The pandemic has altered perceptions of safety and security for millions of people. Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of pandemics are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their gender. The effects of pandemics can be observed in the following ways:

- » Compounded economic impacts are felt especially by women and girls who are generally earning less, saving less, and holding insecure jobs or living close to poverty.
- » Unpaid care work has increased, heightened care needs of older persons and overwhelmed health services. This has a direct link to wage inequality, lower income, poorer education outcomes, and physical and mental health stressors.
- » As the pandemic deepens economic and social stress coupled with restricted movement and social isolation measures, gender-based violence is increasing exponentially. Many women and girls are being forced to 'lockdown' at home with their abusers at the same time that services to support survivors are being disrupted or made inaccessible.
- » The health of women and girls generally is adversely impacted through the reallocation of resources and priorities, including sexual and reproductive health services.
- » School closures lead to many consequences such as loss of education and learning; some adolescents dropping out of school permanently in order to work or care for sick relatives; increase in risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, child marriage and teenage pregnancy; reduction of social interactions between peers; and interruption of other school-based services, including school lunches and social services. Lack of access to distance learning platforms and resources also increase the marginalization of the adolescent girls.

*Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of pandemics are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their gender.*

*Climate change contributes to social and intergenerational injustice; those who have contributed least are most impacted. World Bank estimates that climate change could push more than 100 million additional people back into poverty by 2030.*

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges that the world is facing today. It threatens the livelihoods and well-being of all people and societies. It is considered not just an environmental issue but also development, humanitarian, and above all a gender equality issue. It contributes to social and intergenerational injustice; those who have contributed least are most impacted. World Bank estimates that climate change could push more than 100 million additional people back into poverty by 2030. Since it affects ecosystems and agriculture, its consequences will have an extreme burden on poor women and girls, who bear the responsibilities in agriculture in many parts of the world. In situation of natural disasters linked with climate change, women, and girls often lose access to education, vital health services, including sexual and reproductive health care, and they face a heightened risk of gender-based violence. The inequality and discrimination experienced by adolescent girls, especially the most marginalized, are amplified by climate change. The effects of the climate crisis can be observed in the following ways:

- » Girls' education often comes first to be sacrificed by the families when faced with the impacts of the climate change. Girls are forced to drop their schools to help their families. When they are out of school it is less likely to learn about the climate change and its effects.
- » Child marriage becomes a negative coping mechanism in the face of economic hardships caused by climate change. This puts millions of girls at risk of sexual and physical abuse, early pregnancy, and maternal death.





*The impacts of climate change cause many people to migrate which puts girls' safety at risk.*

- » The impacts of climate change cause many people to migrate which puts girls' safety at risk. These risks are worst when girls are collecting natural resources and when staying in temporary shelters.
- » Disruption to health services due to disasters increases unplanned pregnancies and sexual and reproductive health problems. Certain diseases may affect girls more than boys if they are already suffering from malnutrition or a lack of water, especially during menstruation or if they are pregnant or young mothers.

The background of the entire image is a dense, repeating pattern of small, stylized line drawings of girls' faces. Each face is unique, with various hairstyles like pigtails, buns, and braids, and some have bows or flowers in their hair. The pattern is light red and covers the entire background.

# CALL FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT





***All the opening remarks on the International Day of the Girl Child in 2020 made a call for a joint action and emphasized the need for speaking up altogether for the girl child.***





**VUSLAT DOĞAN SABANCI**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF AYDIN  
DOĞAN FOUNDATION

***"A world without discrimination, exclusion and violence against girls is our common goal, this is not an easy goal, it is a marathon, and we must never stop running fast."***

All the opening remarks on the International Day of the Girl Child in 2020 made a call for a joint action and emphasized the need for speaking up altogether for the girl child.

In her opening speech, Vuslat Doğan Sabancı, Vice President of Aydın Doğan Foundation, emphasized the devastating impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the whole world. Doğan Sabancı gave examples of the extent to which girls and women were affected by this change. Doğan Sabancı touched upon important topics such as increased violence against women and children, increased domestic and sexual abuse and the fact that survivors had to continue living under the same roof with the abusers due to the pandemic. She pointed out the disadvantaged situation experienced by women also in the fields of economy and employment. Emphasizing that the majority of people working domestic and care work with less earnings and without social security are women, Doğan Sabancı highlighted that women did four times unpaid work compared to men during the pandemic. Doğan Sabancı expressed that the number of women who lost their jobs was also higher than men and referred to studies showing that women were subjected to early and forced marriage due to being away from education. She also underlined that girls and women became stronger and leading changemakers and are role models in such a challenging period. Ms. Doğan Sabancı concluded her remarks by reminding that education of young girls has always been one of the priorities of Aydın Doğan Foundation since its establishment and made her call to all stakeholders and girls sharing the same goal.

Nona Zicherman, Deputy Representative of UNICEF to Turkey, drew attention to significant and adverse impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and climate change on children in the changing world. Such crises had adverse impacts on children especially in terms of health and wellbeing. Zicherman gave examples of such adverse impacts and emphasized that a child born today would be living, when they turned 71, in a world 4 degree warmer and that almost 25% of children will be living in a world with limited water resources by 2040. Pointing out to the fact that girls, especially within the context of crises, were exposed to violence, child labor and forced marriage, Zicherman stated that all existing inequalities, including gender inequality, escalated because of climate change and pandemics. Underlining that the lives of girls and women were affected more with the school closures and interruption of basic services during the pandemic, Zicherman stated that 2.6 billion students could not go to school in 192 countries because of COVID-19 pandemic. Zicherman also shared statistics showing that unintended pregnancies amounting to 7 million and 30 million child marriages were expected in the long run.

Zicherman continued by stating that we should not forget the significant role played by girls in overcoming such challenges resulting from the negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and as a solution for these problems, she laid weight on our obligation to ensure that children have a say for all these issues affecting their lives and health. Zicherman expressed that it was necessary to divert the focus of both boys and girls on universal and qualified education that would reinforce their competence in the areas of science, technology, engineering, mathematics and arts. Zicherman concluded her remarks by conveying the following message for all organizations and community members:

***"Let's work together and support children in dealing with this crisis."***



**NONA ZICHERMAN**  
DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE  
OF UNICEF TO TURKEY

***"When discussing the negative effects of climate change and COVID-19 on girls, we should bear in mind that they can and are already playing an important role in meeting these challenges."***





**ZEYNEP BAŞARANKUT KAN**  
ASSISTANT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF UNFPA TO TURKEY

***“Especially in times of crisis, it is necessary to be aware of the risks that girls face, sometimes not easily seen, and to take special precautions and increase outreach accordingly. The public, private sector, non-governmental organizations, influencers and society should work hand in hand...”***

Assistant Representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Turkey, Zeynep Başarankut Kan, disclosed important statistical data during her speech: According to UNFPA projections, 31 million new violence cases occurred every 6-months period of the pandemic; 33,000 girls would be forced to marry adult men on this day only; and one in every five married women were in union before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Zeynep Başarankut Kan emphasized that 7 million unintended pregnancies would occur across the world because of the pandemic.

Expressing that, 47 million young girls could not access modern family planning methods, she added that the interruption of education, which was the golden ticket to save girls from violence, early marriage and poverty during the crisis, had a very negative impact on girls. Başarankut Kan finally stated that special measures and outreach activities must be increased; adding that UNFPA carried out studies with a view to support girls and adolescents in this regard. She concluded her remarks by quoting Azize, who is one of the girls supported by UNFPA: *“I have a dream: I want to live peacefully. I want to live happily and freely. May all be equal, whether poor or rich; boy or girl, but all be equal! I dream a beautiful world.”*

During her speech, Asya Varbanova, Country Director of UN Women Turkey reminded that in the world, where humanity faced different and unforeseen challenges each day, there was an ongoing struggle with unsolved problems such as inequality and discrimination, which were getting more aggravated. Expressing that the problems being discussed on that day were all major and big problems regardless of their being old or new, Varbanova pointed out that effects of climate change, health problems and gender inequality challenged people to seek new solutions. Varbanova continued: “I am firmly convinced that



unless we harness the ideas, the talents, the energy of young people, and particularly of young women and girls, we will not be able to deal with the challenges of today and we will not realize the Sustainable Development Goals.” Varbanova reminded that 2020 was a significant year in terms of gender equality, being 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. She emphasized that the progress should be accelerated, and big bold steps should be taken rather than small and gradual ones to achieve sustainable development goals by 2030. Varbanova finished her remarks by conveying the message that we should encourage all people to take steps that would challenge stereotypes.



**ASYA VARBANOVA**  
COUNTRY DIRECTOR OF  
UN WOMEN TURKEY

***“Unless we use the ideas, talents and energies of young people, especially young women and girls, we will not be able to cope with today’s challenges and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. If we want to achieve these by 2030, we need to accelerate progress and take big and bold steps.”***



During the conference, particular attention was given to the work of young people on how to break down the barriers in front of girls. 111 children and young people, including refugee children, came together between June and October 2020 and carried out workshops on the effects of climate change and pandemics on girls and women. They declared a statement at the conference, through which they vocalized their thoughts, criticisms, and suggestions. The requests of children and young people included the followings:

- » Children and youth emphasized the need for various projects, competitions and events to be organized in order to include the topic of climate change in the compulsory education curriculum and to increase awareness and motivation of students on the subject. In addition, it is necessary to raise awareness at society level in order to strengthen the response against climate change and to ensure that families pay attention to water, energy and recycling issues.

## YOUTH STATEMENT

***"All children and youth, whether refugees or not, disabled or not, forced to child labor or child marriage, boys or girls, should be listened and their needs also should be heard. Fairer, more equal and more sustainable life can only be achieved in this way."***

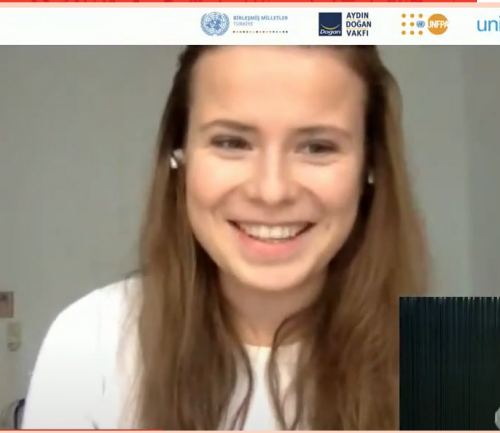


- » Emphasizing the importance of increasing the intensity and frequency of public announcements about the effects and consequences of climate change, children and youth called for “climate justice for all.” They emphasized that it is necessary to raise awareness of everyone, especially of girls and young women, about climate change, and to increase the opportunities and support provided by institutions to people who are adversely affected by climate change. In this direction, they stated that they believe; all institutions and organizations should work more impact-oriented. They expressed their demands in order to encourage efforts to slow down climate change and to specify environmentally friendly products through certificates and the awarding mechanism.
- » Expressing that the right to health should be more accessible for everyone, children and young people drew attention to the necessity and importance of providing services in different languages in call centers so that individuals do not have language barriers.
- » Based on the desire of all children and young people to make their voices heard freely, they demanded creation of platforms where current problems can be discussed and especially girls’ participation in children’s rights so that they can raise their voices.
- » In line with the need for socialization, they expressed the need to establish groups according to age, gender and language differences, and to organize social activities such as sports, exercise and dance within this scope.
- » They wanted education to be accessible to all, based on equal and up-to-date information. They stated that they wanted families to be conscious and to support children so that no one would be excluded from education.

They requested that all children and young people, whether they are refugees or not, whether they have any disabilities or not, those forced to child labor or child marriage, all girls or boys should be listened to and their needs should be heard.

*Emphasizing the importance of increasing the intensity and frequency of public announcements about the effects and consequences of climate change, 111 children and young people called for “climate justice for all.”*



**LUISA NEUBAUER**

CLIMATE ACTIVIST,  
FOUNDING PARTNER OF  
FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE

***"Today, beyond just asking what the girl child's role should be, I would like to ask what everyone else's role should be? If you really would like to respect what girl children are doing, get together, organize and do whatever you can so that their future is lucky and truly secure. If you truly respect girls and their rights, you will not just say well done and act collectively."***

Luisa Neubauer, the keynote speaker of the conference, climate activist and one of the founding partners of Fridays for Future, talked about gender barriers encountered by girls with examples from her own life. She explained that when she was young, she was told that if she worked hard enough, learned enough, did her homework and became successful, 'she could become anything'; but no one then told her about the climate crisis. She stated that girls face great inequalities worldwide and this became an obstacle in the way of young women like her to grow up in a free world. Neubauer stated that when she learned about the climate crisis and understood that her future was taken away from her while there was this message that 'she could be anything', she got angry. But that realizing this situation was a privilege, too. Pointing out that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there were two perspectives about the girls' situation in the world, she stated that one of these was treating girls with pity and the other with glorification but lack of respect. ***"Girls' actions towards advocating their rights and their organization against climate change will only be meaningful if they are respected"*** said Neubauer and underlined that congratulating them and sustaining negative behaviors would be disrespectful. Neubauer expressed that she wanted to ask, 'not only what should be the role of girls but what should be the role of everyone else?'. Conveying her message determinedly, Neubauer made a call: ***"Join together, start organizing, start doing whatever you can to ensure that girls continue to feel secure."***

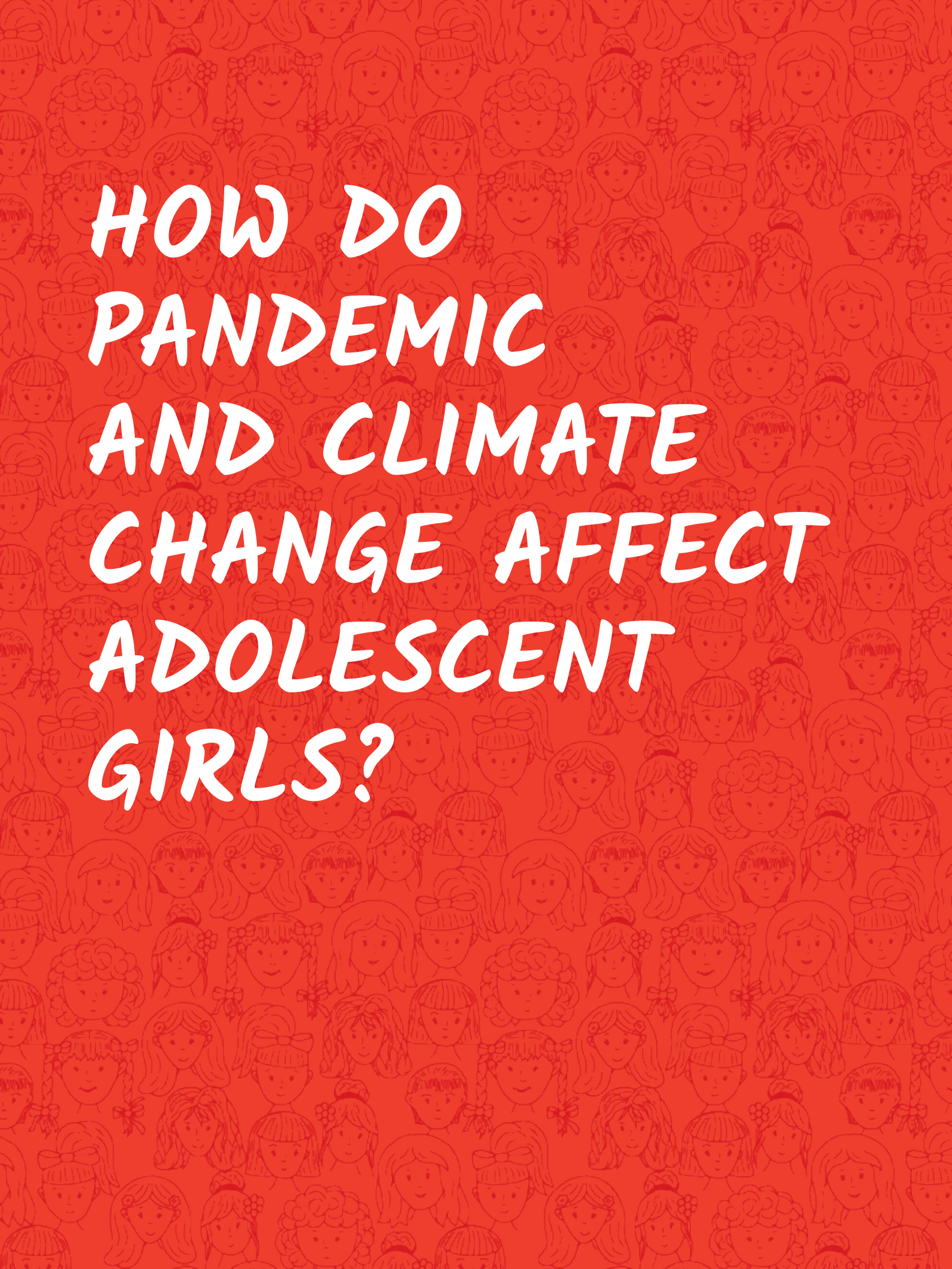


Cedi Osman, Turkish National Team and NBA Basketball Player, as well as Eda Erdem and Bahar Toksoy Guidetti, Turkish National Volleyball Team Players, contributed to the conference through video messages and called for shared responsibility for strong girls and strong tomorrows.

Madelle Kangha, United Nations Young Leader for the Sustainable Development Goals and Founder of JumpStart Academy Africa from Cameroon; Eglantina Avdiu, Generation Unlimited (GenU) Youth Representative from Kosovo; Farishta Wali, Youth Representative from Afghanistan; Raina Ivanova, climate and child rights activist from Germany; and Zeynep Betül Demirses, child rights activist and founder of IChild from Turkey delivered their inspiring video messages to young women and girls.

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**HOW DO  
PANDEMIC  
AND CLIMATE  
CHANGE AFFECT  
ADOLESCENT  
GIRLS?**





***The first panel entitled “How do Pandemic and Climate Change Affect Adolescent Girls?” was moderated by journalist and author Melis Alphan. astrobiologist Betül Kaçar, social pediatrics specialist Betül Ulukol, photographer Annie Griffiths and sociologist Amber Fletcher attended the panel.***



*“Social inequality is the real threat to our security and vulnerability, which makes our future uncertain.” astrobiologist, Betül Kaçar said and underlined that we are living in a world divided into two.*

The first panel entitled “How do Pandemic and Climate Change Affect Adolescent Girls?” was moderated by journalist and Author Melis Alphan. Astrobiologist Betül Kaçar, social pediatrics specialist Betül Ulukol, photographer Annie Griffiths and sociologist Amber Fletcher attended the panel. Scientist in the field of molecular biology and astrobiologist, Betül Kaçar mentioned being a scientist in the changing world and how the future changes would affect girls. Considering anthropologist Margaret Mead’s answer to the question of ‘what is the earliest sign of true civilization?’, which was ‘a healed femur’, as surprising, Kaçar pointed out to the difficulty of survival with a broken femur. Kaçar continued that in a period when humanity went through climate change and pandemic, which could separate people from each other, some people would see such experience as a price to be paid for social and technological developments that humanity enjoyed and explained that the privileges we enjoyed would feel like a healed femur.

*“Social inequality is the real threat to our security and vulnerability, which makes our future uncertain.”* she said and underlined that we are living in a world divided into two: On one hand there are developed societies that seemed to have found the way to progress, and on the other hand, there are societies that are more vulnerable and their improvement and empowerment could only be achieved by the helping hand of the powerful. According to Kaçar, to survive altogether globally, it is necessary to find a way to reconnect these two groups and strengthen the bond. Kaçar expressed that gender equality and equal opportunities in education could build that bridge and gave examples of how inequality could complicate our lives further. *“Every being in this universe pays a price due to pandemic and climate change,”* she highlighted and stated that people in the less advantaged groups had become even more vulnerable and would continue to be more than that. Kaçar remarked that we all walked together, but some of us walked easily while others felt as if they had been walking through the water or wading through the mud and all of us felt this inequality at every step we took.

According to Kaçar, who learned at a young age that education is a privilege and not every person has access to it, science is not only learning and exploring great things. Science is, in the end, a collective activity. It requires working together and establishing connections. Underlining that some possibilities depended on the flexibility of the individuals, Kaçar emphasized that freedom of travel was the simplest element in that regard. Kaçar gave a summary of a to-do list in order to protect girls and more disadvantaged groups:

1. Preparations should be made in cooperation with education professionals.
2. Equal opportunities must be created for all. Long-term cooperation should be established with professional scientists and studies should be conducted using evidence-based data.
3. Girls should be provided a childhood during which they are respected.
4. Sustainable relations should be established with their role models.

Betül Kaçar concluded her inspiring remarks by addressing to the girls listening: *“Dear sisters, we live on a planet where we are constantly told how to live our lives, starting from an early age. You will go against deep-rooted ideas that have been going on for centuries. Developing humanity’s hipbone is not an easy battle. Get strength from the many women who have fought this war before you. Let knowledge be your armor, seek knowledge, acquire and create it, and fight for the right to education!”*

During her speech, Prof. Dr. Betül Ulukol, who is an academic member in Social Pediatrics Department in the Medical Faculty of Ankara University and the Chair of Child Protection Unit, answered the following question: “What are the child protection risks that may arise during COVID-19 pandemic in your opinion as a pediatrician?” According to the highlights by Ulukol, addressing the issue starting

*During her speech, Prof. Dr. Betül Ulukol answered the following question: “What are the child protection risks that may arise during COVID-19 pandemic in your opinion as a pediatrician?”*



*Being the first female photographer and the founder of Ripple Effect Images as well as having worked for National Geographic in approximately 150 countries, Annie Griffiths was also among the conference panelists. Stating that girls change the world, Griffiths underlined that by creating opportunities for them and educating them, we could carry the world a step further.*

from the earliest times of history, childhood is, by nature, very fragile and its value was understood only in the last century. Only after the concept of child rights and the convention on the rights of the child came to the fore that childhood was a distinct and important period. This was how the ideas that 'We need to inform them' and 'We need to give them these rights' came up. Underlining especially that pandemic period affected children very deeply, Ulukol stated that social norms around gender make girls more fragile; thus, pandemic period affected girls and women more deeply. Adding that she would not like to paint a very dark picture, Ulukol put an emphasis on the great power that girls possess. Ulukol expressed her will to talk, beyond all this fragility, about this powerful side of children and continued by stating that even though they were behind in knowledge and experience, children have an incredible ability and adaptive power and this power bring them to a very different point. Ulukol gave the message that these powers of children should be given to them, and childhood should be seen as a potential, not as weakness, and that adults should use this potential. Ulukol concluded her speech by reminding that it was very important and valuable to reveal the sources of inspiration to children and to be a role model for them.

Being the first female photographer and the founder of Ripple Effect Images as well as having worked for National Geographic in approximately 150 countries, Annie Griffiths was also among the conference panelists. Stating that girls change the world, Griffiths underlined that by creating opportunities for them and educating them, we could carry the world a step further. Griffiths reminded that only two weeks before the conference, two women were awarded Nobel prize. Conveying the message that all people should know the success stories of the girls, Griffiths stated that she found the opportunity to come together with girls all over the world thanks to her travels and to listen to their stories. Griffiths underlined that education was of

great importance and a sine quo non for children. She expressed that educated individuals and girls in particular could change the world. Reminding that 70% of healthcare workers were women, Griffiths highlighted the fact that the humanity was going through a period when the women were most needed. Griffiths gave the message that we should be aware of what girls and women could do and tell their success stories those around us. Griffiths conveyed that her mother, who had been denied the position to be a flight attendant because of wearing glasses but who also later became a pilot, was a great role model for her and concluded her remarks with a clear-cut message:

***"When you work together, you can even move mountains. You must be each other's best friends, be united and encourage each other."***

As the last guest of the first panel, Sociologist Dr. Amber Fletcher, an academic member in the social studies in Canada who also works with those affected from climate change, was asked the following questions: "How are girls and women affected from the current situation?" "What roles do they play as the change leaders?" Fletcher stated that climate change and current COVID-19 pandemic did not affect all equally and gave an example explaining that girls' and women's responsibilities increased in relation to housework. Fletcher highlighted that drought and food shortages also had more negative effects on girls. Stating that men tend to react to crises with anger when their senses of security were damaged during crises, Fletcher explained that the roles assigned to girls and boys could also change. Fletcher reminded that structural inequalities should be eliminated and gave the message that this elimination could only be achieved by girls. Fletcher concluded her speech by expressing her expectation from each and every one of girls to be change ambassadors.

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# THE WORLD WE IMAGINED





***In the second panel discussion of the day, the floor was given to the youth, who set their hearts on working in the social field, for them to voice how they wanted to change the world. The speakers of the panel discussion moderated by the TV Presenter Gözde Atasoy were the following: Şeyma Nur Sağınç, student of Law at İstanbul University; Muhammet Rüştü Aktaş, student of International Relations at İstinye University; Selin Gören, climate activist in Fridays for Future and student at Yale University; and Dağlar Çilingir, Health and Training Coordinator in Youth Approaches to Health Association.***



*Continuing her speech by talking about her work in the field of gender equality, Sağınç underlined that in today's world climate change was as much important as gender equality and touched upon her work in that field, too.*

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Sağınç started her speech by sharing that she grew up in a small settlement, where currently almost all girls were married and with child; however, she tried to follow a different path from the very beginning. Continuing her speech by talking about her work in the field of gender equality, Sağınç underlined that in today's world climate change was as much important as gender equality and touched upon her work in that field, too. Expressing her will to live in a healthy and balanced world, Sağınç stated that she wanted to live in a colorful and equitable environment, where the color is not associated with gender. Sağınç finished her speech by conveying a message: *"One person can mobilize the whole humanity."*

Working at the Child Rights Volunteers Association, Muhammet Rüştü Aktaş began his speech by informing that he started to work on child rights thanks to Committees on the Rights of The Child. After mentioning the structure of the committees and the association along with his work, Aktaş provided the details of children's right to freedom of association. Touching upon education, Aktaş expressed his belief that education should continue, even if distantly, for those having difficulty in accessing school and that the state should provide infrastructures and services to every district and village, thanks to which children could enjoy equal opportunities. With a view to giving forth real and concrete suggestions, Aktaş concluded his speech by stating the following: *"Think freely, share these thoughts and feel free."*

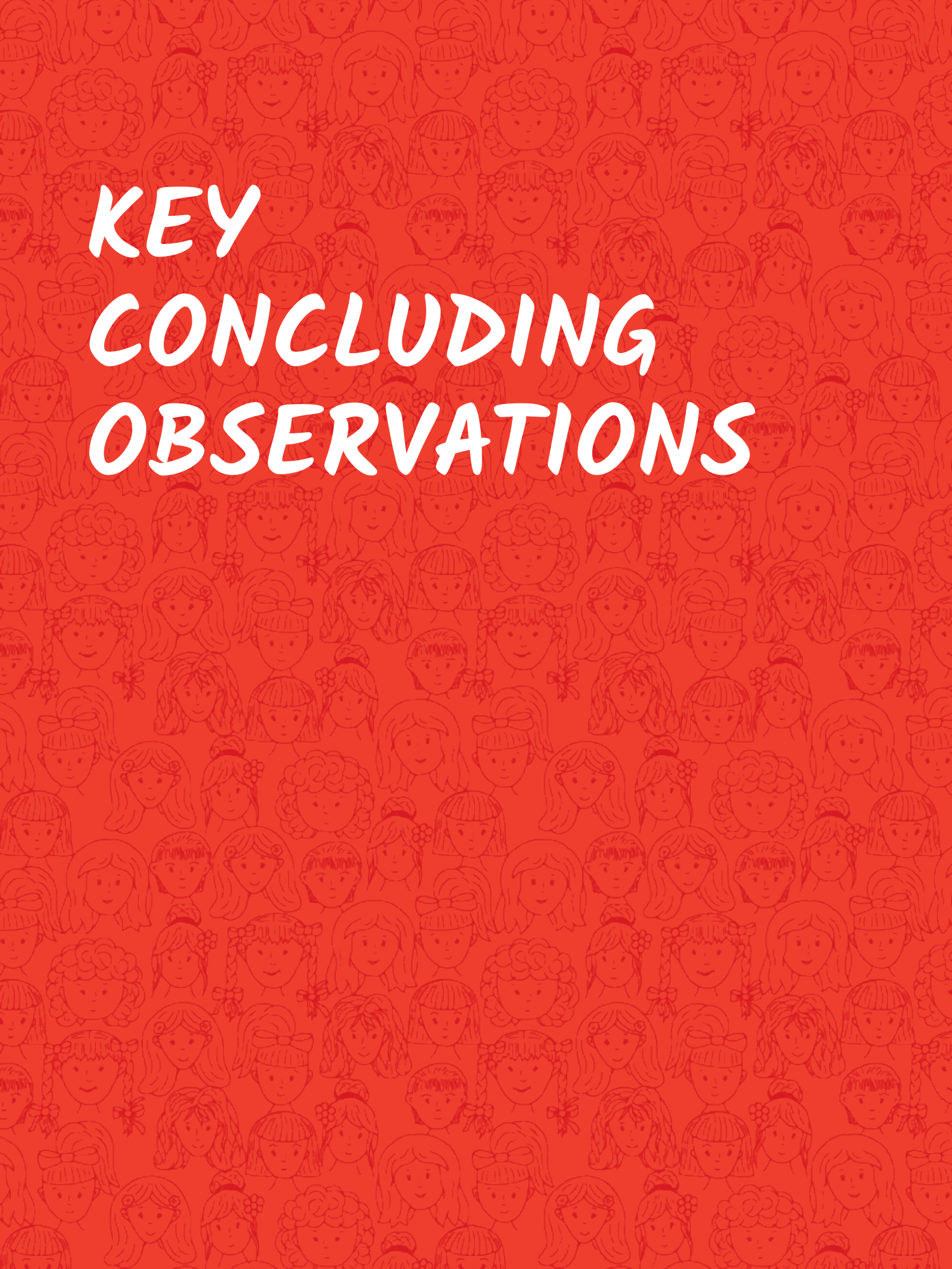
Fridays for Future climate activist and student at Yale University, Selin Gören, who connected to the conference via live broadcast, started her speech by describing a dystopian movie that no one had seen, yet. Gören stated that the film involved a scenario full of earthquakes, floods and forest fires and where extreme temperatures and cold followed one

another; glaciers melted, and sea levels rose, and ecological diversity was decreasing day by day. While conveying that the communities with the lowest socioeconomic level were in the most vulnerable position in this dystopian universe, Gören underlined that these communities were the ones that had the least part to play in the emergence of these disasters. Stating that girls were one of the groups most affected by these disasters, Gören emphasized that it was getting more and more difficult for girls to access education and that girls were forced to work at home and in the fields. Gören talked about a terrible scenario, where young people were increasingly distanced from the public sphere and imprisoned in their homes and would be exposed to psychological and physical violence during climate migration when they grew up, and she strikingly revealed the fact that humanity lived this scenario, which they had never thought to come true, in today's world. Differently from this dark picture, painted by Gören to the attention of all the conference participants, Gören stated that youth were already aware of this situation and started to work to that end and continued her speech with hopeful statements: *"It is never late to find a solution."*

Health and Training Coordinator in Youth Approaches to Health Association, Dağlar Çilingir, on her turn, did a mental exercise for participants so that they picture what girls in particular went through during the pandemic. Çilingir, who had the audience portray the figure of a young girl named Neşe in mind, effectively drew attention to the troubles of young girls during the pandemic period through Neşe. As a result of that exercise touching upon such topics as financial troubles, tension with the parents, violence, insecurity, menstrual irregularity, the pressures suffered by young girls in their most productive period of life were expressed. Even though Neşe was only a figure, the exercise pointed to a problem that had many examples today. Çilingir provided her recommendations about how to solve such problems with a few touches. Explaining that a few touches such as uninterrupted internet, access to education, hope for the future, a room of their own, communication with friends and the like could easily turn all these negativities into positive, Çilingir pointed out that these negativities were not limited but increased in line with the pandemic. *"We, as the youth, are ready to be the solution itself, not a part of it."* said she and called out to the adults in her concluding remarks by stating that they were expected to be a guide in creating a space for the youth in decision-making and to lend a helping hand and increase cooperation.

*Health and Training Coordinator in Youth Approaches to Health Association, Dağlar Çilingir, on her turn, did a mental exercise for participants so that they picture what girls in particular went through during the pandemic.*





# KEY CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS





**Gözde Atasoy**

TV Journalist  
TV Producer



**Şeyma Nur Sağınç**

30 Years Professional Organizer, Youth Rights, Women's Rights  
Board of Directors, National Council of Women  
Youth Rights Foundation Project Manager



**Muhammet Rüştü Aktaş**

Human Resources 2, Social Responsibility, Social Justice, Sustainability Strategy  
Head of Human Resources at Turkey's Ministry of Health, Child Rights, Women's and Gender



**Selin Gören**

Human Resources, Social Responsibility, Sustainability Strategy  
Climate Activist and Student, Fridays for Future



**Dağlar Çilingir**

2019 Digital to Digital Transformation  
Y-Peer Turkey Youth and Training Coordinator



**Within the scope of the International Day of the Girl Child Conference, organized for the sixth time with the theme of "Being an Adolescent Girl in a Changing World," how the pandemic and climate crisis affects girls and what the role of girls can be during these crisis periods were discussed.**




## KEY CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Within the scope of the International Day of the Girl Child Conference, organized for the sixth time with the theme of "Being an Adolescent Girl in a Changing World," how the pandemic and climate crisis affects girls and what the role of girls can be during these crisis periods were discussed.



The key recommendations expressed by the International Day of the Girl Child Conference panelists are summarized below:

- » Women and girls are disproportionately and more negatively affected by crisis periods. Yet, girls and women play critical roles in these periods and achieve great success in terms of social development.
- » Engagement opportunities and platforms for girls and young women should be increased; platforms should be created and supported where they can make their voices heard.
- » Fighting the epidemic and climate crisis is our duty and we need to act as all people without any discrimination.
- » The role of education should not be denied in the fight against gender inequality, child, early and forced marriages and violence against women. All segments of the society, especially families, should be informed about these problems, their awareness should be increased and their individual participation in this struggle should be supported.
- » It should not be forgotten that the current problems have deepened with the pandemic, therefore, faster and more determined steps should be taken for solutions.



*Fighting the epidemic and climate crisis is our duty and we need to act as all people without any discrimination.*



## 6<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD CONFERENCE | OCTOBER 11, 2020 – ON YOUTUBE

Theme: “Being an Adolescent Girl in a Changing World”

16:00-16:10  
**Opening**

**Opening by Master of Ceremony:**  
Master of Ceremony Hazal Kaya

**Opening Speeches:**

Vuslat Doğan Sabancı, *Vice President of Aydın Doğan Foundation*  
Nona Zicherman, *Deputy Representative of UNICEF to Turkey*

16:15-16:20

Youth Statement

16:20-16:30

**Keynote Speaker:**

Luisa Neubauer, *Climate Activist, Founding Partner of Fridays for Future, Germany*

16:35-16:40

Video Messages

16:45-16:48

Zeynep Başarankut Kan, *Assistant Representative of UNFPA to Turkey*

16:48-17:30

**Panel 1:**

**How do the  
pandemics and  
climate change  
affect adolescent  
girls?**

**Moderator:**

Melis Alphan

**Panelists:**

Betül Kaçar, *Astrobiologist, University of Arizona, USA*  
Betül Ulukol, *Social Paediatrics Specialist, Ankara University, Turkey*  
Annie Griffiths, *National Geographic Photographer and Founder of Ripple Effect Images*  
Amber Fletcher, *Sociologist, University of Regina, Canada*

17:32-17:35

Asya Varbanova, Country Director of UN Women Turkey

17:35-18:05

**Panel 2:**  
**The world we imagine – Youth discussing how they would like to change the world**

**Moderator:**  
Gözde Atasoy

**Panelists:**

Şeymanur Sağınç, Student of Istanbul University Faculty of Law, Aydın Doğan Foundation Project Volunteer

Muhammet Rüştü Aktaş, Student of İstinye University International Relations Faculty, Child Rights Volunteers Association

Selin Gören, Climate Activist and Student, Fridays for Future

Dağlar Çilingir, Y-PEER Turkey Health and Training Coordinator

**Video Messages:**

Madelle Kangha, UN Young Leader for the SDGs and Founder of JumpStart Academy, Cameroon

Eglantina Avdiu, GenU Young People's Action Team, Kosovo

Farishta Wali, GenU Young People's Action Team, Afghanistan

Raina Ivanova, Climate and Child Rights Activist, Germany

Zeynep Betül Demirses, ICHILD, Turkey

18:05-18:15

Interactive Q&A

18:15-18:25

Video Messages

18:25-18:30

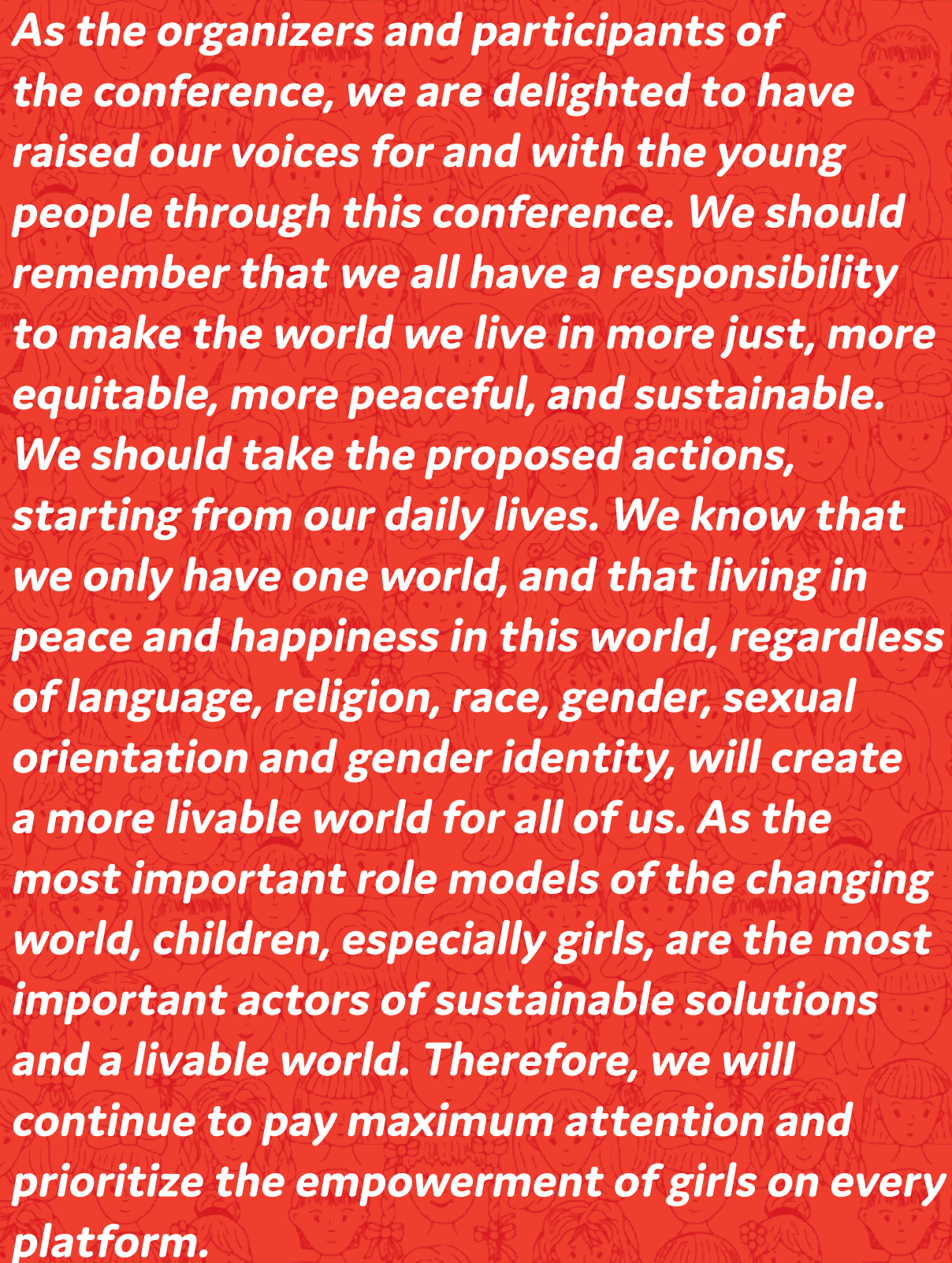
Closing Speech by Master of Ceremony





**FINAL REMARKS  
– UNTIL  
THE NEXT  
CONFERENCE...**



The background of the image is a solid red color with a repeating pattern of small, stylized girl faces. Each face is a simple line drawing with various hairstyles, including pigtails, buns, and braids, and some have bows or flowers in their hair. The faces are arranged in a grid-like pattern, filling the entire background.

***As the organizers and participants of the conference, we are delighted to have raised our voices for and with the young people through this conference. We should remember that we all have a responsibility to make the world we live in more just, more equitable, more peaceful, and sustainable. We should take the proposed actions, starting from our daily lives. We know that we only have one world, and that living in peace and happiness in this world, regardless of language, religion, race, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, will create a more livable world for all of us. As the most important role models of the changing world, children, especially girls, are the most important actors of sustainable solutions and a livable world. Therefore, we will continue to pay maximum attention and prioritize the empowerment of girls on every platform.***











