



**Oral Statement**  
**44th session of the Human Rights Council**  
**Annual discussion on the rights of the Child**  
**Panel 1 – Realizing the rights of the child**  
**through a healthy environment**

Make Mothers Matter would like to highlight the key role of parents, especially mothers as the primary caregivers, in realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment.

A healthy environment is key during the early years, including during pregnancy: the beginning of a child's life is a period of special sensitivity and importance for their development in reaching their full potential. Early childhood is therefore a critical period for the realization of the rights of the child, beginning with the right to health<sup>1</sup> - and it is a period when children are heavily dependent in all aspects on their caregivers, who in most cases is their mother.

Above all, a mother's exposure to environmental pollution during pregnancy and breastfeeding can negatively affect the development of her child, with potentially devastating life-long consequences<sup>2</sup>.

As parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child<sup>3</sup>, they are also in the best position to mitigate the risks and effects of environmental harm on their children, especially during these critical early years.

We at MMM are therefore calling on Member States:

1. To recognize parents, especially mothers, as relevant and key actors for the realization of the rights of the child through a healthy environment
2. To support and empower parents through awareness-raising on potentially damaging environmental issues for their child, access to information and environmental education.

<sup>1</sup> General comment No. 7 - Implementing child rights in early childhood + WHO Nurturing Care Framework

<sup>2</sup> Report of the UN SR on toxic waste and children rights A/HRC/33/41 - paragraph 56

<sup>3</sup> Convention on the rights of the Child, article 18

---

**Make Mother Matter - MMM** - 5 rue de l'Université 75007 Paris, France - Tel/fax: +33 1 42 88 27 28

mmmi@makemothersmatter.org - www.makemothersmatter.org

Contact in Geneva: Valerie Bichelmeier - un-geneva@makemothersmatter.org

*Make Mothers Matter (MMM) is an international NGO created in 1947 to raise the awareness of policy makers and public opinion on the contribution of mothers to social, cultural and economic development. MMM has no political or religious affiliations, and thus transparently voices the concerns of mothers at international level with permanent MMM representatives at the United Nations (General Consultative Status), UNESCO and the European Union.*