



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ban Ki-moon
Secretary General
The United Nations
405 42nd Street
New York
NY, 10017
United States of America

Monday, 1st February 2016

Dear Secretary General,

I seek your advice and action on ensuring that the UK Government fulfils its obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In the UK Budget last July, the Conservative Government proposed to work towards the implementation of a two-child policy for tax credits which would, in effect, limit payment of benefits to families only for the first two children.

Even more worryingly, the Government is also looking to implement a specific clause which would require a woman, whose third child was born of rape, to prove this to a Government official in order to receive tax credit payments. I believe this is absolutely abhorrent and has no place in the twenty-first century.

Section 6.3 of the UK Government Budget of July 2015 stipulates:

"The Child Element of tax credits and Universal Credit will no longer be awarded for third and subsequent children born after 6 April 2017. This will also apply to families claiming Universal Credit for the first time after April 2017. Households who have been in receipt of tax credits or Universal Credit, with an interruption of less than 6 months, will be protected. Furthermore, children with disabilities will continue to receive the Disabled Child Element or Severely Disabled Child Element in tax credits and the equivalent in Universal Credit. Multiple births will be protected in both systems. The Department for Work and Pensions and HMRC will develop protections for women who have a third child as the result of rape, or other exceptional circumstances. Consequential changes will be made in Housing Benefit from April 2017."

My firm belief is that to pursue such a policy stigmatises mother and child, and risks discriminating against those who may for religious or traditional reasons have larger families. My colleagues and I have asked the UK Government on numerous occasions about how this policy would work, but have not yet received a satisfactory explanation. Over 10,000 people have now signed a petition calling upon the Government to scrap the rape clause, which I hope will finally elicit a response from the Prime Minister.

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Having looked at all fifty-four articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, I believe that the UK Government's proposal to limit tax credit payments to just two children breaches a number of articles in the convention which, as you know, the UK signed in 1990 and later enacted into legislation in 1992. I would be greatly appreciate it if the United Nations could investigate whether the proposal to restrict tax credits to the first two children breaches the UNCRRC.

I believe that there are clear grounds that this policy directly contravenes the following articles of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Article 2: "*States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction **without discrimination of any kind**, irrespective of his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, **birth** or other status".*

Article 4: "*States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. **With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.***"

Article 5: "*States Parties shall **respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents***".

Article 18, Subsection 3: "*States Parties shall take **all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible***".

Article 26, Subsection 1: "*States Parties shall recognize for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right... **The benefits should, where appropriate, be granted, taking into account the resources and the circumstances of the child and persons having responsibility for the maintenance of the child, as well as any other consideration relevant to an application for benefits made by or on behalf of the child.***

I believe that the UK Government's move to restrict tax credits to the first two children is totally at odds with each of these important articles and respectfully request that these points be taken into consideration at the UN. I would be grateful if appropriate representations could be made to the UK Government who, I believe, are embarking upon behaviour that is tantamount to social engineering.

Yours sincerely,



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