

## **Rede anlässlich der Eröffnung des UNICEF-Gipfels am 15.10.2019**

### **Es gilt das gesprochene Wort**

Dear Elke Büdenbender, dear secretary of state Juliane Seifert, dear Georg Graf Waldersee and dear Gary Stahl (UNICEF), dear representatives of Child Friendly Communities from all over the world, dear children and youngsters, dear members of the city council, I would also like to welcome all politicians and employees of the City of Cologne, dear distinguished guests,

welcome to Cologne! It is a great pleasure to have you here! Cologne is infamous for its cultural diversity. We are home to people from 182 nations. When I look around the room I can tell, that today we are reaching a new record! Today, Cologne is even more international and colourful than on an every day basis. This is wonderful and I am really happy to have UNICEF by my side – as an initiator and partner.

This is the first time ever, that we are gathering in this particular manner. And I am proud that we could make this happen just before the 30th anniversary of the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child takes place. We are meeting here today to follow-up the guidelines, that were first set back then.

Childrens rights need to play an important role in the planning and management of global cities today.

As you may know: I myself was born and raised in Cologne. I feel at home here, connected to the people and the places, that all left an impact on me.

I am determined to give children in this city the best possible opportunities to grow and develop into self-reflected and wise human beings. Chances must be fair: whether we are talking about the possibility to take part in social or cultural activities or if it is about equal chances in education. All those points are on my agenda. And I will not take them off, unless they are integrated into Cologne's every day life.

I strongly believe, that we only borrowed this world from our children, and therefore I also think, that it is vitally important to let them participate in shaping it.

I am happy to see the members of the „Child and Youth Advisory Boards“, among us here today, and that you have chosen the title: „Our cities. Our Lives. Our Future.“ for your manifesto. Because that’s what it is: it is your world!

The seal Child Friendly City is important to us – however, it is a calling more than it is an award. Whenever we feel like we are off track, when we need to find our reason why we started this journey to becoming a child friendly community – that’s the time when the seal will remind us all, what we are working for.

Equal Child Rights! On a local and regional level as well as on state level!

The state is where Childrens Rights should have their origin. Their roots. The inclusion of individual rights of the child into our constitution is the best way to do that. Germany with its very traditional and renowned constitution could serve as an example for other states. So that we can all work together to create the big picture: a child friendly world, where their rights are equally important to our rights as adults.

I would like to leave you with this vision for now. And I hope, that this joint picture will give us a little more drive to join forces – and find new solutions for our communities in the upcoming days.

I would like to thank UNICEF again and thank you all for coming and making this summit special and important. Thank you.