Lawyers Welcome UN CRC's General Comment on Child Rights Acknowledging the Impact of Both Positive and Negative Interactions with Animals.

Monday 4 September, 2023

The UK Centre for Animal Law (A-LAW) welcomes that the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has recognised the impact that witnessing violence inflicted on animals can have on children and conversely the positive benefit of interacting with the animal world.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has responsibility for the interpretation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on 22 August 2023 it published General Comment 26[1] which focuses on the environment and climate change.

The General Comment (which is legally binding on countries who are signatories to the Convention) acknowledges the potential positive and negative impacts of interactions with animals in the following sections:

Section C: Right to life, survival and development includes the statement at paragraph 23 that:

‘The developmental benefits of a healthy environment include those linked to opportunities to experience outdoor activities and to interact with and play in natural environments, including the animal world.’

Section G: Right to freedom from all forms of violence (art. 19) states at paragraph 35 that:

‘Children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals.’

As the World Federation for Animals states[2]:

‘The Committee, responsible for monitoring the Convention’s implementation, issues General Comments on various issues relating to children to which it believes State parties should devote more attention. With General Comment 26, the Committee is helping States understand that protecting children from violence inflicted on animals is essential for upholding child rights.

The Committee’s explicit reference signifies an important step toward ensuring that cruelty to animals is seen as unacceptable.’

The European Link Coalition has long advocated for the recognition of the potential impact that witnessing violence towards animals can have on children. Malcom Plant, spokesperson for the group states[3]:

“The realization that we protect animals when we protect children - and protect children when we protect animals is ground breaking ….

‘This should mean that no child can be taken trophy hunting, attend bullfighting or animal sacrifice festivals. It should also mean creating laws to protect children from violence against animals within their homes.'

In discussing the potential implications of General Comment 26, he states:

“Such interpretation provides NGOs around the world with an authoritative remit to demand governments achieve compliance by introducing policies which address traditions and practices where children are exposed to violence against animals.”

Erin Leach, A-Law volunteer and a Researcher in international human rights law, specialising in the application of the core international human rights treaties and ECtHR caselaw states:

‘What we see here is a convergence - a meeting point of kinds, one where the Committee has recognised with absolute clarity that the welfare of children and animals is connected. In my view, this is the entry of animal protection into international human rights law, and it will be incredibly interesting to see how the treaty framework and national jurisdictions choose to progress these rights.’

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Related Keywords:

Child Rights :: Animal Protection :: Law :: International Law :: Human Rights ::

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The UK Centre for Animal Law welcomes General Comment 26 and will be working with the European Link Coalition and others to support its proper implementation and enforcement.

If you have any questions or wish to contact a member of the A-Law team for comment, please email info@alaw.org.uk.

Notes for the editor:

- The UK Centre for Animal Law (A LAW) is a charity that exists to promote knowledge and education about the law relating to animal protection, and the more effective enforcement of legislation relating to animals.
- We are registered as a charity in England and Wales. We are politically neutral. As well as publishing legal analyses to inform public debates, we provide animal protection organisations with access to high quality legal advice to assist their work. We also promote the teaching of animal law in UK universities.
- We seek to be a source of objective, independent legal analysis on animal protection law issues. Whilst legal topics are often complex, it is our job to explain them as clearly as possible, to increase the effectiveness of UK animal protection organisations collectively, and to promote informed public debate.
- We are led predominantly by volunteer lawyers and work closely with legal academics and others on a multi-disciplinary basis to further animal welfare objectives.
- For further information about us, or to access our online resources, please see our website: www.alaw.org.uk

[1] *General comment no. 26 (2023) on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change* (22 August 2023) *OHCHR*. Available at:

(Accessed: 30 August 2023).

[2] Mantilla, S. (2023) *Protection from violence against animals is now explicitly part of child rights*, *World Federation for Animals*. Available at:

(Accessed: 30 August 2023).

[3] *A new Tomorrow* (no date) *europelinkcoalition*. Available at: https://www.europeanlinkcoalition.com/fr/newtomorrows#:~:text='Children must be protected from all forms of,UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
(Accessed: 30 August 2023).

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