

Welcome Remarks from Hani Mansourian and Audrey Bollier, The Alliance Co-coordinators

The COVID-19 crisis has already **exacerbated root causes** of some of the biggest threats to children's survival and wellbeing: hunger, poverty, and reduced access to health, education and protection services. **That is why we are here this week:** to prepare ourselves to prevent as much as possible and to respond to child protection harms that will result from the COVID-19 crisis.

We are delighted to have you all at the **2020 Annual Meeting for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action**. This year, we will certainly miss our face to face interactions. But it is impressive to see how technology has enabled us to expand our ability to host many more of you than we could if we were meeting face to face. We are expecting up to **1,000 colleagues** in this meeting!

We wanted to start by recognizing the difficulties that most of us have been dealing with in the past months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We had to deal with the emergency and the consequences of the health measures personally and professionally. **Kudos to all of you for having made it this far!**

When the COVID-19 hit the world stage, we were ready to support CP practitioners in part because the 2019 edition of the CP Minimum Standards had incorporated guidance on responding to infectious disease outbreaks. As of **late February**, the Alliance had formed an **inter-agency task team** to start working on COVID-19 and by the time WHO declared COVID-19 a Pandemic, we were ready to release our [first technical note](#) on protection of children during the Coronavirus outbreak.

We went on to produce [10 additional annexes to the technical note](#) and hosted almost [30 technical webinars](#) on different topics throughout the past 6 months. Many of you or your organizations generously contributed your expertise and time to this process. The reward is that these technical materials are being used by practitioners in the field, with guidance being downloaded **over 120,000 times** in the past 6 months only from the Alliance website. This is a testament to their relevance and quality!

When it came to deciding about the theme of this year's Annual Meeting, the decision was not too hard. **COVID-19 has so drastically increased a multitude of risks to children**, while hindering our ability to effectively protect children, that we naturally gravitated towards dedicating this Annual Meeting to the topic of infectious disease outbreaks and protection of children. This means, that while we will be talking about COVID-19 and its short and long term impacts on children, we also want to think about **future infectious disease outbreaks** that will unfortunately occur and will continue to negatively impact children.

We want to take this opportunity to thank all of those who have been and continue to be involved in the organization of this event. Our **presenters** who have submitted high quality abstracts, which has helped us shape this meeting, our **facilitators** who are supporting the pillars of the next 5 days, our **Working Group and Task Force leads**, the **many organizations** are contributing to this event.

And finally, thanks to all of you, **dear colleagues** for working so hard to protect children, despite challenges and adversity!

Enjoy the rest of this event!