

# HAVING KIDS™

## *Child-first Advocacy*

[HavingKids.org](http://HavingKids.org)

[info@havingkids.org](mailto:info@havingkids.org)

H.E. Mr. António Guterres  
Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Executive Office of the Secretary-General  
S-3800, United Nations Secretariat Bldg  
New York, NY 10017

December 11, 2018

Re: Open Letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres regarding the urgent need for a new statement on family planning

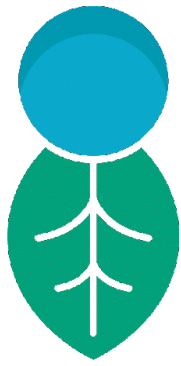
Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

We write to follow up on our [letters of April 10, 2018](#) and [September 27, 2018](#) suggesting that you make an informal statement on the need for a new ethic, and a truly human rights-based approach, to family planning. The need for change is more urgent than ever.

**Since our last letters, several new developments underscore the need for truly fundamental change. Current and downstream attempts to deal with climate change are failing, [as demonstrated by the events in France and elsewhere](#), and the [United Nations own reports](#). The United States recently determined [that climate change will kill thousands](#).**

We need a family planning model that explicitly promotes smaller, equitable and sustainable families. As you know, [small changes in average fertility rates have massive impacts on population growth](#), and [smaller families](#) are the best way to confront climate change, as well as other and related environmental crises. [The evidence is clear](#).

Simply stated, the [current family planning model](#) used by the United Nations is the fundamental source of the problem, ensuring unsustainable population growth in a way that degrades equality, democracy, and our environment. This archaic model was developed before we learned what we know today about climate change, the disproportionate impact of early childhood development on human wellbeing, the way birth conditions and early childhood can exacerbate inequality, etc.



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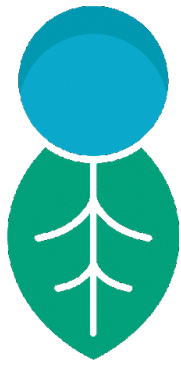
The current family planning model makes our future less secure, healthy and equitable than it should be. Many better models have been proposed, [including one by leading political theorist Sarah Conly](#), and Having Kids' own model, [the Fair Start approach](#) (detailed [here](#)). To begin the process we have [asked public figures to take action and speak out](#), but the United Nations should lead.

**The United Nations continued adherence to [the old model](#), despite its fundamental contribution to the degradation of our social and natural environment, is eroding the fabric of the international human rights regime.** Changing family planning models is [the most comprehensively effective solution to the world's greatest problems](#). The United Nations is obligated to make that change. **You must speak out now, and change models.**

Former Secretaries-General have issued influential statements on family planning. Prior statements have focused on parents; we urge you to consider instead focussing on the needs of future children, and how those needs (like those laid out in the Children's' Rights Convention ("the Convention")) must shape [truly human rights-based family planning models](#).

Circumstances have changed since many of the prior statements were made; a new statement is urgently needed.

- Several studies confirm that [smaller families](#) are the best way to confront climate change, as well as other and related environmental crises. If we take climate change seriously, we must laud the benefits of a global family planning ethic that promotes smaller families.
- The science of early childhood development [shows the disproportionate impact the beginning of our lives](#) has on the rest of our lives. This holds true, among other things, for [economic inequality](#). Thus any attempt to ensure children's rights, like those in the Convention, must begin with family planning. Other interventions are simply too late. A statement from your office on child-centered family planning will emphasize its necessity.



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- Better family planning is now understood to be an [effective way](#) to prevent the conditions that give rise to terrorism and other conflict-based threats to human rights and democracy. In today's world, a new statement on this role for family planning is required.

Your statement on the current science and the need for a new ethic and a truly human rights-based approach to family planning is vital to recognizing family planning as [the most effective long-term solution to many of today's problems](#). We need a family planning norm centered on maximizing the planning for and care of children. In fact, a child-first model based on giving all kids a fair start would advance all 17 of the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals.

We urge you to consider issuing a statement on family planning, one that accounts for the updated science, focuses on the needs of the child, and recognizes the unique role family planning plays in shaping the future of the world.

Sincerely,

*Anne Green*

Anne Green, PhD  
Executive Director  
Having Kids

[Having Kids](#) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to reforming family planning by replacing parent-centered family planning models with the human rights-based and child-first Fair Start model.