The global economic impact of physical, psychological, and sexual violence against children can be as high as $7 trillion, or 8% of the world’s GDP.

A Pandemic of Violence
Around the world, a child dies every five minutes as a result of violence. Half of all children – 1 billion girls and boys – are victims of violence annually. Research and experience shows that girls and boys experience the causes and consequences of violence differently with vulnerable groups at higher risk. Violence against children includes physical, emotional, and sexual violence as well as abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

An Unprecedented Opportunity
While the situation is dire, the next Administration is poised to drive momentum to end violence against children internationally. In 2016, key US Government players, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the President’s Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) joined key international players to endorse the INSPIRE package, an evidence-based technical package of interventions to prevent and respond to violence against children and adolescents around the world.

The US Government has made significant progress in addressing specific threats to children – with success demonstrated in issues such as child marriage, child trafficking, child labor, displacement, and recruitment into armed groups. Efforts have been led by multiple agencies including, but not limited to, USAID; PEPFAR; CDC; Department of State’s Office of Population, Refugees and Migration; Department of State’s Office of Global Women’s Issues; and Department of Labor’s International Labor Affairs Bureau. However, much of this work addressed issues through specific sector lenses rather than considering violence against children as a broader challenge.

Building on the whole-of-government foundation of the Action Plan for Children in Adversity, by coupling the next Administration’s commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable children with the INSPIRE package, the US Government is well-positioned to advance the growing global movement to prevent and end all forms of violence against children. The US Government has an unprecedented opportunity to advance an appropriately funded, whole-of-government response to address the complex and interrelated challenges of violence against children across the humanitarian to development spectrum.

A Smart Investment
Working through our foreign assistance to protect children from violence is in the best interests of the US Government. Violence against children negates other US international development investments, including global health, early childhood development, education, and economic strengthening. Unaddressed exposure to violence disrupts the development of critical brain architecture and other organ structures, leaving children at life-long risk of disease, impairment, and reduced potential and making them less able to live productive lives and benefit from US-supported interventions. Globally, we pay a high price for not acting to protect children and promote early child development. By addressing violence against children, our humanitarian and development dollars will go further, our trade partners will be stronger, and societies will be more stable.

Seventy INSPIRE Strategies
Implementation and enforcement of laws
Norms and values
Safe environments
Parent and caregiver support
Income and economic strengthening
Response and support services
Education and life skills

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A New Understanding
Until recently, the global community has compartmentalized violence against children. Traditional interventions forced vulnerable children and victims into specific categories and failed to recognize that common risk factors or shared vulnerabilities. However, recent research proves that these challenges must be addressed through an approach that examines and acts upon the child’s whole environment and
involves a wide variety of stakeholders that can prevent and respond to risks, abuse and violence. The INSPIRE package follows this new thinking and includes seven strategies for ending violence against children.

**Recommendations for the Next Administration**
Within the first 100 days in office, we call upon the next Administration to:

1) **Join the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.**
   As a response to the inclusion of Sustainable Development Goal 16.2, “End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children,” leaders across the globe launched the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children which is partnering with stakeholders across the world to build political will, accelerate action, and strengthen collaboration towards preventing and ending violence against children. We ask that the next Administration join the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and commit to sharing lessons and technical support and integrating the INSPIRE package across US Government foreign assistance priorities.

2) **Appoint a high-level leader within the Administration with the mandate to convene and lead a whole-of-government approach to ending violence against children and convene an Interagency Policy Council (IPC) or similar council.**
   While the US Government has invested in efforts to prevent violence against children, these projects and programs have been spread across a variety of departments and agencies with minimal coordination or commitment to an overarching strategy and without the leadership needed to convene and advance a whole-of-government strategy. To make a significant impact commensurate with the problem, this initiative will require accountability and a high-level leader with the mandate, the capacity, and the expertise to lead a whole-of-government approach to violence against children.

   By convening an IPC or similar mechanism, the next Administration can call upon substantive experts and senior government officials from across the government to develop and implement a whole-of-government policy and relevant procedures to combat the pandemic of violence against children. To be effective, the IPC or similar structure should include senior leadership of all relevant departments that deal with international children’s issues.

3) **Announce a “Call to Action” Presidential Summit on Ending Violence Against Children to galvanize support from the appropriate stakeholders in generating political will and defining the US Government agenda.**
   We ask the next Administration to convene a Presidential Summit to urge government, civil society organizations, and the private sector to convene and address a time sensitive, paramount issue. Building on the international movement to end violence against children, the US has an opportunity to convene influential multi-government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector to define its agenda and strengthen US foreign assistance for preventing, responding to, and ultimately ending violence against children.

We the undersigned urge the next Administration to consider our request.
1 Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, http://www.end-violence.org/
4 http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)31701-9/fulltext
5 http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/
6 http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)31698-1/fulltext
9 Including but not limited to U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Labor, State and Defense; the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Health and Human Services (including CDC), the Peace Corps and the Millennium Challenge Corporation.