Joint Statement from the National Consultation on
Social Justice for Children:
To End Child Abuse and Violence Against Children

We, the participants in the National Consultation organized by the Children’s Studies Center for Research, Policy and Public Service of Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, in consultation with experts from the neurosciences and social sciences, from the judiciary and the courts, from the Defending Childhood Initiative of the U.S. Attorney General, from the child protection and child advocacy community, from the legislature of New York State and government of New York City, and from the U.N. Secretary-General Violence against Children,

Gathered in New York at the Association of the Bar of the City of New York to share the latest research findings about the incidence and epidemic levels of exposure to violence faced by our nation’s children, the challenges faced by juvenile and family court judges, the concerns of child protective and advocacy agencies, the ideas for new policies, regulations and legal initiatives by New York State legislators dedicated to protecting children from violence, interested in joining the national initiatives of Defending Childhood by the U.S. Attorney General and the international endeavors of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children,

Recognizing the critical need to explore ways of collaboration and to establish new synergies between the different sectors in our society dedicated to the prevention of violence against children and to promote awareness in the nation of the deleterious effects of maltreatment of children,

Recognizing the epidemic levels of violence experienced by the children in our nation, the neuroscience and social science studies about the deleterious lifelong and trans-generational consequences of child abuse and neglect, the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which assesses associations between childhood maltreatment and lifelong physical and mental health effects, together with the large numbers of child fatalities from child abuse in the United States – the highest in all industrialized nations, indicate the urgent need for federal and state governments to develop effective measures to prevent and eliminate all forms of such violence,

Recognizing the priority attached by the U.S. Attorney General to ending the cycles of violence and victimization of our children, the social science findings of the first National Survey on Children Exposed to Violence (2009), the compelling findings from the neurosciences and epigenetic research about children exposed to stress, maltreatment and lack of maternal care, as well as the public health problems and economic costs to the nation engendered by all those children exposed to epidemic levels of violence,

Recognizing the establishment of the U.S. Attorney General’s Defending Childhood Initiative Task Force, the S.175 Violence Against Children Act 2011 introduced U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer,
Recalling the last National Commission on Children created by Congress and President Ronald Reagan on December 22, 1987, and its report Beyond Rhetoric. A New Agenda for Children and Families, published in August 1991 with its comprehensive national agenda for action, and recalling the nine White House Conferences on Children since 1909,

Recognizing with appreciation the important initiatives pursued by numerous national and local organizations and public agencies to prevent child abuse and neglect and child fatalities and ameliorate the effects of children exposed to violence as victims and witnesses in the home, in schools, in institutions of foster care, juvenile justice and mental health, in the community at large and in numerous other settings,

Express our determination to join forces and work collaboratively toward the prevention and elimination of violence against children in all its forms and to promote cross-sectoral collaboration in order to advocate and promote:

a) The development of robust plans of action to address all violence against children at federal, state and local levels;
b) The creation of a National Commission on Children, the first since 1987, as a new federal effort to address the challenges facing our nation’s children, also recommended by Senator Christopher Dodd, Chair of the Senate Children and Families Subcommittee in June 2010, and by Child Welfare League of America;
c) The establishment of a New York State Commission on Child Abuse and Violence Against Children;
d) The development of federal, state and local policies, legislation and regulations to prohibit all forms of violence against children in all settings;
e) The establishment of a National Consortium of Violence Against Children of civil society organizations to develop in partnership joint plans of action;
f) The consolidation of national data systems and research on violence against children and the dissemination of relevant information to inform advocacy, policy making and resource mobilization to safeguard children’s right to freedom from violence.

We recognize the robust potential of cross-sectoral collaboration and in close cooperation with the A.G. Defending Childhood Initiative and those of legislators committed to the elimination of all violence against children, commit to:

a) Promote the sharing of experiences, good practices and effective measures between public and not-for profit child protective and advocacy organizations;
b) Support the development of state and federal platforms and measures by also including key stakeholders from the religious community, the private sector and the media to achieve children’s protection from violence;
c) Support initiatives to build a culture of respect for the human rights of children and freedom from violence;
d) Establish synergies of information and action between the different sectors represented here and our joint efforts in future to effectively prevent and address violence against children in all forms.

New York City, November 4, 2011

Please sign
Your name and title

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