October 22, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As we near the 25th anniversary next month of approval by the United Nations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), I am writing on behalf of the American Bar Association respectfully to urge the Administration to send that Convention to the U.S. Senate for consideration early in the 114th Congress.

The ABA, with nearly 400,000 members worldwide, is the national representative of the legal profession in the United States, enjoying global reach and influence. The ABA has a strong interest and special expertise in this area, having established a Center on Children and the Law in 1978 to help improve children's lives through law, practice, and policy reform. The ABA and the Center have multiple policies and projects relating to enhancing access to justice for children and families, and we view ratification of the CRC as critical to this objective.

The CRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. Since its adoption in 1989 (which the ABA quickly endorsed), the CRC has proven a powerful tool to improve laws and policies for children and families around the world. Although the Clinton Administration signed the CRC in 1995, the treaty has never been submitted to the Senate for consideration.

The failure of the United States to join almost every other nation as a party to the CRC undermines the ability of the United States to advocate for children and families fully and credibly elsewhere in the world. As President Obama once noted, it is “embarrassing” to be in the same company as Somalia as a CRC holdout, and he pledged to review the CRC to reinforce U.S. global leadership in human rights.

Here at home, children face unprecedented exposure to adversity, poverty, violence, abuse, and exclusion. As it has all over the world, the CRC would provide the United States with a comprehensive framework to analyze, document, and report on conditions for children, including how government agencies consider the views of parents and youth. That framework would in turn help officials at all levels of government develop policies and programs that better meet the needs of children and families.
Twenty-five years after the CRC came into force, and 19 years since the United States signed that Convention, it is time to take the next step toward ratification by submitting the Convention to the Senate.

Sincerely,

William C. Hubbard