***Do the ‘Right’ thing!* Teighan Judge, St. Teresa’s Primary School, Belfast.**

Parents, teachers, principals, politicians, and most importantly, pupils – good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to present at this afternoon’s all important summit, celebrating international children’s day. I feel honoured and privileged to speak at such an event, and likewise, I feel honoured and privileged to speak to you today, as a child who from her very first day here on earth, has always lived with full, unfettered access to the rights that underpin the UNCRC. But, **it should not** be an honour, or a privilege to live a life with these rights – it should be, as it is in name, **a right**, an inevitable right, that we all have from birth.

I feel so strongly about each of the 54 articles, but one that I am particularly passionate about concerns Article 3, that is ***“Adults must do what’s best for me.”*** When I look around this room, I am immediately greeted with the faces of those who care for me the most. I can see my parents whose whole life is, and has always been, dedicated to doing what’s best for me. I can see my teacher, and principal, who strive only to do what’s best for me (*even if it doesn’t feel like it when I’m learning about equivalent fractions on a cold Monday morning)* And I can see the faces of those people who make decisions for children like me every day, and I hope, in doing so, they too seek to do what’s best for me too. All of these adults care for me, support me, and are the reason I am standing before you today. Without them, I would not be the Teighan Judge that is, if I say so myself, pretty special indeed!

It makes me terribly sad, confused, but mostly furiously ANGRY that this is not the experience of every child in our world, in our country, and even our towns and cities. How can it be that there are so many children in this world who are denied this right, that do not have adults in their life to do what’s best for them, that do not have parents who protect and care for them?

How can it be that there are still, when it is almost 2020, governments in countries that are made up of adults who ignore the best interests of children when they are making laws and decisions? What hope do they have for the future of their country, for the future of our planet, for the future of humanity, if they seek to ignore the needs and wishes of the children in their care?

I ask you these questions, and with respect, I expect you to listen. I may be a child, I may be small, but I know that I have a voice and my voice matters. More and more we are seeing children like me make a huge global difference. Mala and Greta, though children like me, have make a remarkable difference to speak up about gender equality or climate change. I seek not their glory nor their fame, but their impact.

You may ask, what can I do about it? How can I make people aware of the importance of this article, and the fact that it is being denied to so many? Well, the answer, in my opinion, is action. Any kind of action. As a pupil at a Right’s Respecting School *(Hello P6C St. Teresa’s!!)*  I have done many things to raise awareness of the issue. Every year, our school holds a special right’s respecting week assembly co-ordinated by our Rights Respecting Steering Group. We ensure children know what the rights are and why we need them. This educates both pupils and teachers, and enables us to educate people at home. Additionally, our school recently invited the NSPCC who provided workshops detailing how adults should look after us, and what we should do if we think we are being denied this right.

This was, a small step, you may think, but together, small steps can make a huge difference. As a child, the next steps that I take will continue to be small, but I know they will combine to make a long and successful journey into ensuring that, as far as I can help it, all children have full access to these rights.

That is why I am so delighted to be speaking with you all today. Here, in this room, are the people who can make a difference. The people who make laws in this country are in this room. I urge you to do whatever you can to ensure that all children have access to adults who do what’s best for them. I urge you to be these adults for all of us. I urge you to work tirelessly for the children of our society. We are the future. We are the next generation of adults. Set the **right** example. Do what **is right**, give us **our rights.**

Thank you.