



**Dear Delegates,**

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2014 Montessori Model United Nations Conference.

The following pages intend to guide you in the research of the topics that will be debated at MMUN 2014 in committee sessions. Please note this guide only provides the basis for your investigation. It is your responsibility to find as much information necessary on the topics and how they relate to the country you represent. Such information should help you write your Position Paper, where you need to cite the references in the text and finally list all references in the Modern Language Association (MLA) format.

The more information and understanding you acquire on the two topics, the more you will be able to influence the Resolution writing process through debates [formal and informal caucuses], and the MMUN experience as a whole. Please feel free to contact us if and when you face challenges in your research or formatting your Position Papers.

We encourage you to learn all you can about your topics first and then study your country with regard to the two selected topics. Please remember that both committee members need to be well versed and ready to debate both topics.

Enjoy researching and writing your Position Papers.

We look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

MMUN Secretariat Team

[info@montessori-mun.org](mailto:info@montessori-mun.org)



## **Social, Humanitarian & Cultural**

### **Third Committee**

Year after year, the General Assembly allocates to its Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs Committee, commonly referred to as the “Third Committee”, agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect peoples all over the world.

An important part of the Committee’s work focuses on the examination of human rights questions, including reports of the special procedures of the newly established Human Rights Council. In October 2006, the Committee will hear and interact with 25 such special rapporteurs, independent experts,

and chairpersons of workings groups of the Human Rights Council. The Committee also discusses the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the promotion of the right to self- determination. The Committee also addresses important social development questions such as issues related to youth, ageing, disabled persons, family, crime prevention, criminal justice, and drug control.

**Source:** <http://www.un.org/ga/61/third/third.shtml>

# Rights of the Child

## Topic Background

---



Rights of the child refers to the inalienable rights that all children are born with.<sup>i</sup> Children have a different set of human rights than adults because children rely on adults. Children are especially vulnerable and susceptible to abuses of their economic, social, and cultural rights. The rights of children are broken down into three main categories: provisions, which refers to their standard of living, including food, shelter and education; protection from abuse, neglect and discrimination; and, participation in family and community.<sup>ii</sup>

The rights abuses that affect millions of child are not specific to a particular geographic region but happen throughout the world. There are multiple contributing factors to child's rights abuses such as poverty, lack of education, cultural stigmas, and children often either do not know about their rights or cannot fight for their rights. Examples of child's rights abuses include child soldiers, child trafficking, and forced labor. Unfortunately these abuses occur throughout the world, though they are more common in some parts of the world than others. Forced labor is very common in Asia with 60% of all child labor taking place there.<sup>iii</sup> 50% of all child soldiers are located in countries in Africa.<sup>iv</sup>

It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the rights of the child were recognized. The practice began in France with the enacting of the rights of the child in the work place in 1841. Children's rights continued to gain momentum internationally during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it was not until the League of Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child on September 16, 1924 that the rights of children, and the responsibility of adults to protect those rights, became a part of international law. After World War II, the rights of the child took an even larger precedent as millions of children were left homeless, orphaned, or injured from the war.<sup>v</sup>

The nature of the child's rights abuses has changed as the international landscape has changed such as industrialization and globalization. It is imperative that the rights of the child be protected. Children's human rights abuses can affect children for the rest of their lives. Depending on the human rights abuse it can cause long term health problems, educational disadvantages, perpetuate the cycle of poverty, etc.<sup>vi</sup> The rights abuses negatively affect not the individual but affects global society and economy as a whole. It is in the best interest of the international community to protect the rights of the child.

## Past Actions

---

To combat issue of children's rights abuses, The League of Nations endorsed the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, written by Save the Children founder Eglantyne Jebb. The Declaration focused on the fundamental rights of children necessary for survival. The Declaration was not considered international law, however, but rather a set of guidelines for countries to follow.



The United Nations adopted the Declaration in 1959. It was not until September 2, 1990, however, that the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the first legally binding international precedent regarding children's rights, the Convention on The Rights of The Child. The convention has been ratified by 192 states, with the notable exception of Somalia, South Sudan and the United States.<sup>xi</sup> (The United States justified its lack of signing by saying the U.S. played a role in writing the convention but could not consider revoking life sentences for convicted children.)<sup>ix</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is comprised of 54 articles and 2 protocols, is considered to be the most important convention regarding children's rights as it establishes that the state must promote the best interest of children without discrimination. The convention focuses on four core principles: non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child.<sup>viii</sup>

Discrimination plays such a prominent role in the convention, it is one of the first Articles stating that, "States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status."<sup>viii</sup>

According to the Convention, children must be free from abuse, exploitation, forced labor and provides children with education, health care, other necessities, and protect particularly vulnerable child populations such as minorities and children with disabilities. It is both the responsibility of the parents or legal guardian and the state to insure the aforementioned rights of the child.

The Convention has also been amended with two optional protocols. The first optional protocol concerns the use of child soldiers in combat particularly by nongovernmental actors and came into force in 2002.<sup>xi</sup> The second optional protocol requires the prohibition of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The second protocol came into effect in 2002 as well.<sup>xii</sup>

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the United Nations organization that works to eliminate human rights abuses against children. UNICEF promotes "the principles and provisions of the Convention and the mainstreaming of children's rights in a systematic manner, in its advocacy, programming, monitoring and evaluation activities."<sup>iv</sup> The Convention on the Rights of the Child gives UNICEF specific children's rights issues to investigate, report and intervene in.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a UN body that monitors the enactment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two protocols. States issue reports to the committee and the committee then makes recommendations regarding each states specific needs. The committee also makes recommendations to states to make sure that the convention is being used as a guideline for making and implementing policy. The committee presents the findings of its state reports during September at the General Assembly.<sup>viii</sup>



Many of the positive changes that have come from the Convention on the Rights of the Child have been from the state implementing the convention in its policies, though it would be very difficult and costly for governments to implement the convention on their own, so they rely on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to assist with implementation. There are many NGOs throughout the world that work specifically with children's rights and specifically eradicating children's human rights abuses. A few notable NGOs are Save the Children,<sup>x</sup> Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI),<sup>xi</sup> Global Movement for Children (GMC)<sup>xii</sup> and Youth Empowerment Alliance, Inc.<sup>xiii</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been internationally praised as one of the most important children's rights conventions. Since the convention's implementation significant decreases have been seen in child mortality with an increase of child literacy and school enrollment amongst other improvements.<sup>xiv</sup> It has set the standard for children's rights throughout the world by incorporating human rights principles into individual member state legislation, creating state and regional committees to work on children's human rights and establishing a justice system for children. Though the convention is not without its critics. Some have spoken out saying the conventions promote too much individualism in children causing them to defy authority, though this remains an unproven theory.<sup>xvi</sup>

## Possible Solutions

---

Children's rights are an ongoing issue that affects approximately 1.9 billion children.<sup>xvii</sup> Unfortunately, even with the strides made by the Convention on the Rights of the Child there is still a long way to go before every child's human rights are realized. The goal of this committee is to find ways to promote and protect the rights of the child. This issue is unique in that the international community almost completely agrees on the terms laid out by the convention. The main issue with the convention comes down to enforcement.

There are multiple important sub-issues to keep in mind when discussing the rights of the child. One of the most consequential issues is enforcement. Though The Convention on the Rights of the Child creates the committee and report system, it requires each state to be completely truthful with their report, which does not always happen. To combat this issue, a third optional protocol is currently open for signatures, which would allow for children to bring their complaints directly to Committee on the Rights of the Child.<sup>xviii</sup>

The second sub-issue is the affect of the cycle of poverty on children. Due to poverty children are often forced to work, rather than attend school, in hazardous conditions. This issue is not due to a lack of recognized rights but instead the child's constant fight for survival. The United Nations has addressed this issue in ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour and ILO Convention No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment and work.

The third greatest sub-issue facing the topic is lack of education, which creates a cycle of poverty; children who are paid less because they are children and then as adults paid less because they are uneducated. However, educational opportunities have increased for children in large part due to the efforts of governments and NGOs.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has also addressed the issue in Articles 23, 24, 28 and 29.<sup>iii</sup> By having greater educational opportunities the cycle of poverty will be broken for the child, allowing for more of their rights to be realized, benefiting not only the individual but also the state and international community as a whole.



The issue of the rights of the child affects millions of children throughout the world. Though the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been but in place there is still much work to be done to ensure that all children's rights are realized. It is the role of this committee to come together to create ways to protect and promote the vulnerable human rights of children, not only for the benefit of children but the world as a whole.

## Further Research

---



### Guiding Questions

- How are children treated in your country? Does your government make special efforts to protect children?
- What is your government's position on child rights? Has your country signed or ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child?
- Are the rights of children being abused in your country or region of the world? What is being done about it? What should be done about it?

### Research Sources

- "Protecting and realizing children's rights." [http://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_protecting.html](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_protecting.html)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>
- Committee on the Rights of the Child: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/>

<sup>i</sup> "The Rights of the Child." *Humanium for Childrens Rights*. Humanium, n.d. Web. <<http://www.humanium.org/en/child-rights/>>.

<sup>ii</sup> "Cyc-online May 2000: Three P's." *Cyc-online May 2000: Three P's*. N.p., n.d. Web. <<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0500-threepees.html>>.

<sup>iii</sup> "Module 4: Child Labor and Child Abuse in Developing Countries." *Child Labor and Child Abuse in Developing Countries*. N.p., n.d. Web. <<http://www.uniteforsight.org/gender-power/module4>>.

<sup>iv</sup> "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children." *UN News Center*. UN, n.d. Web. <<http://www.un.org/rights/concerns.htm>>.

<sup>v</sup> "Children's Rights History." *Humanium for Childrens Rights*. N.p., n.d. Web. <<http://www.humanium.org/en/childrens-rights-history/>>.

<sup>vi</sup> "University of Minnesota Human Rights Library." *University of Minnesota Human Rights Library*. University of Minnesota, n.d. Web. <<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/childprotarmed.html>>.

<sup>vii</sup> "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child." *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The United Nations General Assembly, n.d. Web. <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPSCCRC.aspx>>

<sup>viii</sup> "Convention on the Rights of the Child." *UNICEF*. N.p., n.d. Web. <<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>>.

<sup>ix</sup> "OHCHR - Committee on the Rights of the Child." *OHCHR - Committee on the Rights of the Child*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d. Web. <<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/>>.

<sup>x</sup> "Official Site - Save the Children." *Save the Children*. N.p., n.d. Web. <[http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6115947/k.8D6E/Official\\_Site.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6115947/k.8D6E/Official_Site.htm)>.

<sup>xi</sup> "Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)." *ACEI*. N.p., n.d. Web. <<http://acei.org/>>.

<sup>xii</sup> "The Global Movement for Children Unites Efforts to Build a World Fit for Children." *Global Movement for Children*. N.p., n.d. Web. <<http://www.gmfc.org/>>.

<sup>xiii</sup> "Youth Empowerment Alliance." *Youth Empowerment Alliance*. N.p., n.d. Web. <<http://www.yealliance.org/YEA/Welcome.html>>.

<sup>xiv</sup> "The State of the World's Children." *UNICEF*. The United Nations, n.d. Web. <[http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/sowc/pdfs/statistics/SOWC\\_Spec\\_Ed\\_CRC\\_TABLE%201.%20BASIC%20INDICATORS\\_EN\\_111309.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/sowc/pdfs/statistics/SOWC_Spec_Ed_CRC_TABLE%201.%20BASIC%20INDICATORS_EN_111309.pdf)>.

©Montessori Model United Nations. All rights reserved.

Website: [www.montessori-mun.org](http://www.montessori-mun.org)  
Email: [info@montessori-mun.org](mailto:info@montessori-mun.org)

<sup>xvi</sup> "Convention on the Rights of the Child." *Amnesty International*. Amnesty International, n.d. Web.  
<<http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/children-s-rights/convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child-0>>.

<sup>xvii</sup> "The World Has Reached Peak Number of Children!" *Gapminder*. N.p., n.d. Web.  
<<http://www.gapminder.org/news/world-peak-number-of-children-is-now/>>.

<sup>xviii</sup> "Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child." United Nations, n.d. Web.  
<[http://treaties.un.org/doc/source/signature/2012/ctc\\_4-11d.pdf](http://treaties.un.org/doc/source/signature/2012/ctc_4-11d.pdf)>.

