



## General Assembly

Eleventh Session

Distr.: Upper Elementary

XX September 2016

Original: English

### Third Committee – Social, Humanitarian & Cultural

This group focuses on the rights people. It wants all people to be free to make their own choices. They believe that human rights are important and that they apply to every person in the world.

The members of this committee discuss human rights. They also encourage states to respect the rights of their citizens. During the year, they hear a lot of reports from experts and groups about the human rights records of states. Social issues are also important to this committee. Questions of crime prevention, drug control, youth, elderly and others are discussed.

This committee works closely with the Human Rights Council. They passed resolutions on the protection of children, how refugees should be treated, and ending racism.

### Agenda Item 68 – Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children

#### Background

Throughout history children were treated as possessions. They belonged to their parents, usually the father. Many children had no control over their lives. A child treated badly by parents he or she had nowhere to go. Governments were not protecting them. Also, children were put to work at young ages. During the Industrial Revolution six-year-olds worked in mines. The author Charles Dickens helped show people the evils of child labour in his novel *Oliver Twist*.

Since the 1700s people have been discussing the rights of children. Sir William Blackstone said every parent should give their child protection, education, and maintenance. However, many people made money from child labour. This made it a difficult process. For two hundred years, people worked to protect children. In 1924 the League of Nations passed the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*.

In 1948 the UN adopted a longer version of the declaration the League of Nations passed. Finally, in 1959, the UN passed the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*. The Declaration has 10 principles. All the members of the UN agree with the principles.

In 1989 the UN decided children needed to be done to be protected more. They created the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*. The Convention is a treaty that defines all the rights of children. All the states that ratify it MUST follow its rules. All of the states of the UN have ratified this document except for the United States.

Every year the world celebrates Universal Children's Day on 20 November.

- Every day 16 000 children die. Most of these deaths are preventable.
- Globally, undernutrition kills 3 million children before the age of 5.
- In Canada, 5% of children live in homes with difficulty accessing food. These problems are greater in the North.
- The second SDG is to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- 58 million children are not in school. The reasons for this are diverse. Poverty, child labour, poor health and nutrition are all causes. Education is key to ending poverty.
- The Syrian War is the cause of two million children not attending school.
- It is more common for girls not to go to school than boys. Some of the reasons are cultural. Some cultures think boys have more of a right to education. Other reasons are not enough female teachers or women being victims of violence in school.
- The fourth SDG is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”
- Every year 2 million girls under 15 give birth to children. They are at risk of dying during childbirth. Often, they must stop going to school. Nicaragua is the country with the highest rates of teenage pregnancy.
- Since 1990 the rate of children dying before 5 has been cut in half.
- The Syrian War makes getting access to healthcare difficult. Many children have not been immunized. Polio paralyzed 35 children. Polio is a preventable disease.
- Children with an educated mother are more likely to survive than one with none.
- A polluted environment hurts the elderly and young the most. Every year, 1.7 million children under 5 die because of their environment. Smoke from cooking, heating and lighting is one of the major causes.
- 168 million children are child labourers. This means they perform a job stopping them from going to school. The work can be dangerous and stops them from enjoying childhood.
- Most child labour occurs in farming. It is more common for children to be employed at home than to work in a factory. In cities many children work in the informal economy. Some of the most common jobs are cleaner, vendor, or shoe shiner.
- Until 2012 Uzbekistan forced thousands of children to pick cotton. International pressure forced them to stop using children. However, now more adults are used.
- Some governments take suggestions from young people. Many local and federal governments are getting feedback from Children’s Parliaments.

**Declaration of the Rights of the Child**

- ✓ Drafted by Eglantyne Jebb and adopted by the League of Nations in 1924.
- ✓ Adopted by the United Nations in 1959.
- ✓ 10 principles which define the rights of child.
- ✓ Accepted by all the states in the world.

**Convention on the Rights of the Child**

- ✓ Adopted on by the UN on 20 November 1959.
- ✓ States ratify this human rights treaty and must follow its rules.
- ✓ Defines the age of the child to be anybody under the age of 18.
- ✓ Every member of the UN is a party except for the United States.

**Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict**

- ✓ Adopted by the UN on 25 May 2000.
- ✓ Created to stop states from forcing children to fight in the military.
- ✓ Volunteers under the age of 18 can join the military. But they cannot be involved in fighting.
- ✓ 164 states are parties.

**Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography**

- ✓ Adopted by the UN on 25 May 2000.
- ✓ The first article of the protocol says states need to take action that protects children from prostitution, pornography, and being sold.
- ✓ It encourages states to pass laws to punish people who abuse children.
- ✓ 173 states are parties.

**Key Issues for Children's Rights**

Issue	Causes	Top States Affected
<b>Child Soldiers</b>	Poverty Discrimination	Afghanistan Myanmar Democratic Republic of Congo Sudan South Sudan Somalia Yemen
<b>Child Labour</b>	Poverty Barriers to Education Culture and Tradition	Eritrea Somalia Democratic Republic of Congo Myanmar Sudan
<b>Lack of Education</b>	Poverty Inequality between boys and girls	Nigeria India Afghanistan

---

## Guiding Questions

---

1. Research the history of children's rights in your country. What improvements have been made?
2. Does your country protect the rights of children? In what ways does your country need to improve how it protects children?
3. Research the Convention on the *Rights of the Child* and the two *Optional Protocols*. Do you think any other documents need to be created to protect children?
4. Poverty and lack of education are connected. How can children's lives be improved by fixing these two problems? What do you think needs to be done to have this happen?
5. Many individuals, groups and states benefit from child labour. What encourages child labour and what can we do to help it end?
6. Children in conflict zones need special help. What do you think should be done to help children and young people who live in regions with conflict?
7. How can states work together to protect the rights of children?

## Resources

Title	Hyperlink	How is it helpful?
<b>UNICEF</b>	<a href="http://www.unicef.org/">http://www.unicef.org/</a>	The United Nation Children's Fund. UN organization working to help children around the world.
<b>Save the Children</b>	<a href="http://www.savethechildren.org/">www.savethechildren.org/</a>	NGO working to help children around the world.
<b>Free the Children</b>	<a href="http://www.weday.com/We-Schools/Issues-Backgrounders/">http://www.weday.com/We-Schools/Issues-Backgrounders/</a>	Background information on many of the topics that are affecting the rights of children.
<b>Why is the U.S. Against Children's Rights?</b>	<a href="http://ideas.time.com/2012/01/24/why-is-the-us-against-childrens-rights/">http://ideas.time.com/2012/01/24/why-is-the-us-against-childrens-rights/</a>	TIME article about how the US refuses to ratify the <i>Convention of the Rights of the Child</i> .
<b>Declaration of the Rights of the Child</b>	<a href="http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/1959-Declaration-of-the-Rights-of-the-Child.pdf">http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/1959-Declaration-of-the-Rights-of-the-Child.pdf</a>	Full text of the <i>Declaration of the Rights of the Child</i> .
<b>Because I Am a Girl</b>	<a href="http://plancanada.ca/because-i-am-a-girl">http://plancanada.ca/because-i-am-a-girl</a>	NGO that aims to protect the rights of children. They have a special campaign for girls.
<b>Convention on the Rights of the Child</b>	<a href="http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx">http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx</a>	Full text of the <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>
<b>Children and Armed Conflict</b>	<a href="https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/">https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/</a>	UN website about children and armed conflict. Extensive information is provided.
<b>Girl's Education and Gender Equality</b>	<a href="http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_70640.html">http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_70640.html</a>	UNICEF overview of education for girls.