



UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY



STUDY GUIDE



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Welcome Letter

C'MUN 2024 is sure to be an unforgettable experience, and for that, we hope to count on all of you, who will undoubtedly make it even better.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with all the necessary information on the topics to be discussed in the committee, as well as the historical and current context in which they will take place, all the countries directly and indirectly involved, and of course, tips and recommendations so that you yourselves can go even deeper in your search for information. With this, we hope that by the time you have finished writing your Position Papers, you will feel ready to face the challenge of the debate.

The novelty of this General Assembly is obviously the format in which it will take place, which we are sure you will find stimulating and innovative. The first debate will be in the form of a Resolution Debate, which means that delegates will receive a ready-made resolution, modified for educational purposes by the Academics Team and the Chairs, and you will have to debate about it, while trying to amend it so it suits a better approach to the issue as well as your countries policies and views. The theme for this debate will be "The role of children in armed conflict". By the time you have finished the Resolution Debate, you will suddenly find yourself in an Emergency Meeting, where you will have to deliberate urgently on the topic: "The Democratic Republic of Congo: displaced population and human rights". It is of huge relevance that the delegates of the UNGA understand the urgency of the matter, as they will be tackling a topic that failed to be resolved by the Security Council. This way, ensuring peace and security not only in the region but also in the whole international arena relies on your negotiations.

For each of the topics, delegates must submit a Position Paper by April 15th following the rules stated in the "How to do a Position Paper document". Although for us the most important thing is that you are the ones who feel proud of your own work and of the effort you have made to find and contrast new information, remember that for being eligible for a prize you must have submitted a position paper. If you encounter any issue that prevents you from submitting your Position Papers before the deadline, please do not give up and contact one of us.



Finally, we would like to remind you that each of the 60 countries that make up this committee has been chosen specifically for this debate with a purpose and a goal in mind. Whichever country you represent, you all have something important to say and your input is as necessary and relevant for the topic and for other delegations.

We hope that you will take the role with the same seriousness and dedication with which we, the chairs, have written this guide for you, and also that you do not forget that no matter what happens, this is only a simulation. Participate without fear or embarrassment, make mistakes from time to time, ask questions whenever you need to, enjoy your committee, and make C'MUN 2024 an unforgettable experience.

Ana Zamarreño López: Hello future UNGA delegates! I am Ana Zamarreño, a fourth-year student of International Relations. My involvement in Model United Nations (MUNs) started two years ago, driven by my keen interest in global governance and international law. Through my academic journey, the conferences I have participated in have provided me with valuable insights. However, my most profound learning experiences have come from the people I have had the privilege to meet. This course, I hold the esteemed position of President within the UNANIMUN Association of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). I am beyond excited to get to know all of you who are going to make this conference possible. I am eager to share this brilliant committee with you and work hand in hand to make the debate not only fruitful but also a safe space to enjoy the experience!

Àxel Broch i Masana: Hi guys, as you may have guessed I am the co-chair of your committee. Just a year ago, around this time, I was where most of you are now, about to face a MUN for the first time. After getting a scholarship thanks to UNSA Barcelona, I had the privilege of participating as a delegate in C'MUN 2023, and even today, I still keep those memories as a priceless treasure. I can say that I had the best chairs, and thanks to them, I managed to enjoy the experience far beyond the initial nerves and doubts. Now, a year later, it is my first time again, but those nerves are now the desire and illusion before a new challenge. This is how I hope you will feel too, because C'MUN 2024 is going to be, without a doubt, memorable.



Information about the committee

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) was founded in 1945 after World War II to encourage global cooperation and peace. This way, it shows how the world formed new rules for stability after the war. It first met in 1946 with representatives from 51 nations. Over time, more nations joined, especially after decolonization and the Soviet Union's breakup. Today, 193 member states participate in its debates.

The General Assembly is the main decision-making and representative body of the United Nations. It can talk about any topic within the UN Charter or related to the powers of any UN organs. Essentially, it is the most comprehensive representative body in the UN, with the power to discuss and make recommendations on any issue concerning global peace and security. These include development, disarmament, human rights, international law, and resolving disputes between nations peacefully.

In order to achieve so, the General Assembly can make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries and on the general principles of cooperation. It is important to consider that all General Assembly resolutions are not binding and that the committee does not have the competencies to pose sanctions or authorize the use of force. However, the UNGA can bring issues to the Security Council and highlight situations that might warrant sanctions or the use of force. Among the things that the UNGA can do, there is the approval of the UN budget, which is a significant part of its work. Moreover, because of the complexity of its tasks, the General Assembly can create other bodies to help it, as allowed by Article 22 of the UN Charter.

As said, the General Assembly includes representatives from all 193 UN member states. Every country, regardless of its size or power, can take part in discussions, making it an inclusive and democratic forum for addressing global issues. This inclusivity is highlighted by the principle of "one country, one vote" for both procedural and substantive voting. The debates are overseen by the President of the General Assembly, who is elected for a one-year term. Currently, Dennis Francis, a seasoned diplomat from Trinidad and Tobago, holds this position. With nearly four decades of experience, he manages procedural rules such as starting debates, setting the agenda, regulating speaking times, and handling the



suspension or adjournment of discussions. These responsibilities help maintain order and promote constructive dialogue among member states.

Understanding how the United Nations General Assembly works involves knowing the various types of meetings it holds. Firstly, it meets annually in regular sessions, typically from September to December, and resumes in January until all agenda items are addressed, often just before the next session begins. For instance, the 78th session, held under the theme "Peace, prosperity, progress, and sustainability," successfully organized several High-Level meetings.

Special meetings are arranged upon the request of the Security Council or a majority of UN Members to address specific issues. For example, the last special session in 2021 focused on "challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation". Additionally, the General Assembly can convene emergency special sessions to address the maintenance of international peace when the Security Council lacks unanimity. Under resolution 377A(V) "Uniting for Peace", the General Assembly promptly considers the matter and makes recommendations to Members for collective measures, including the use of armed force if necessary in cases of aggression.

Lastly, it's important to outline specific aspects of how the debate will proceed in this committee, as the United Nations General Assembly of CMUN 2024 will operate in two distinct ways. Firstly, the *Resolution debate* will follow a discussion based on a pre-established resolution framework set by the Chairs and the Academics Team. Delegates will engage in negotiations aimed at modifying, removing, or adding clauses to the Topic's 1 Resolution. Secondly, the General Assembly will convene an *Emergency Meeting* to address the issue of displaced population and human rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The debate on the second topic will not commence until the resolution of the first one is voted upon.

Summit of the Future and Chapter II

The UN's Summit of the Future aims to be a game-changer. Scheduled in September 2024, it will be a big UN meeting where world leaders discuss how to work together better to solve problems like wars and climate change. Chapter II, dedicated to **International Peace and Security**, serves as the cornerstone of the Summit. While the UN General Assembly



grapples with a vast array of issues, challenges become exponentially more difficult to address in the absence of global stability.

Conflict creates a ripple effect, disrupting economies, hindering development efforts, and leaving human rights hanging by a thread. Chapter II offers a potential solution by proposing concrete steps to prevent conflicts and address ongoing crises. Imagine a UNGA where discussions on food security aren't overshadowed by the threat of famine in a war-torn region. This way, the Chapter focuses on the identification and approach of the root causes of conflict; such as poverty, inequality, and limited access to resources. This might involve discussions on creating early warning systems to detect potential flashpoints and deploying resources for conflict prevention before violence erupts.

Purposes of the Summit go beyond simply stopping conflicts. The vital link between human rights and peace is also recognized by exploring ways to strengthen the UN's ability to monitor and address human rights violations in conflict zones, ensuring accountability for perpetrators and preventing further atrocities. Discussions could also focus on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who risk their lives to expose the truth in war-torn regions.

Furthermore, Chapter II acknowledges the crucial role of women, children, and youth in building lasting peace. The voices of these often-marginalized groups would be not just heard but actively sought after. Discussions might revolve around empowering women to participate in peace negotiations and reconstruction efforts, addressing the specific needs of children caught in conflict zones, and providing youth with the skills and resources to become agents of peace within their communities.

In essence, Chapter II is not just about resolving conflicts; it's about creating a more stable and secure world where the UNGA can function more effectively, and that will be your job as delegates. Remember to emphasize the importance of the Summit of the Future on your documents.



Topic A: The Role of Children in Armed Conflict

Introduction

The involvement of children in armed conflicts is a concerning phenomenon that affects communities worldwide. According to data from international organizations such as UNICEF and Human Rights Watch, it is estimated that tens of thousands of minors are recruited and used by armed groups in more than 20 countries, including states like Syria, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Colombia.

Infants living in conflict zones around the world continue to come under attack on a shocking scale. A Study from the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) that analyzed the children affected by armed conflict between 1990 and 2022 stated that in this last year, approximately 468 million minors (18.8%, or more than one in six) were living in a conflict zone. Moreover, around 96 million infants were living in high-intensity conflict areas (with 100 or more killed within 50 km of the fighting), showing a decrease of 8.3% from 2021.

These children become involved in armed conflicts for a variety of reasons, including extreme poverty, lack of access to education, political instability, and ideological manipulation. Additionally, forced recruitment and social and familial pressure are factors contributing to their participation in conflict situations.

The consequences of this involvement in wars are deeply devastating and far-reaching: in addition to the immediate risk of physical injury and death on the battlefield, infants face serious risks of psychological trauma, emotional and social development distortion, and deprivation of their childhood and fundamental rights.

To address this issue, legal and policy measures have been established, such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, adopted in 2000. This protocol aims to protect minors from their recruitment and involvement in wars, prohibiting the recruitment of infants under 18 by non-state armed groups and ensuring that states take measures to prevent and avoid the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts.



Furthermore, there are demobilization and reintegration programs aimed at helping recruited minors reintegrate into society and access educational and employment opportunities. However, these programs face significant challenges in terms of financing, coordination, and access to populations affected by conflict.

In conclusion, children's involvement in armed conflicts is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive and coordinated response at both national and international levels. Through the effective implementation of legal and policy measures, as well as support for demobilization and reintegration programs, we can work to protect the rights and well-being of infants affected by armed conflicts and help them build a safer and more hopeful future.

History of the Topic

During the last decades, internal conflicts have unleashed a devastating number of fatalities, placing this period as one of the deadliest since the end of the Cold War. According to data from organizations such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), between 2010 and 2020, internal conflicts accounted for the majority of conflict-related deaths worldwide, with a significant increase compared to previous decades. These conflicts, characterized by their complexity and duration, have disproportionately affected women and children, who are often the most vulnerable in situations of armed conflict.

The participation of children in armed conflicts has been a persistent human tragedy throughout history. As an example, during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), a large number of minors were recruited and participated in combat. It is estimated that up to 150,000 minors, known as the "children of war", were evacuated from Spain during the conflict and sent abroad to protect them from the horrors of the conflict. Those who had not the luck to flee away, were recruited into military units and actively participated in the conflict, either as soldiers, messengers, or in support roles.

Equally important was World War II. During this global conflict, tens of thousands of young people were recruited by military and paramilitary forces in various countries, including Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union. For instance, in Germany, the Hitler Youth trained children from the age of 10 for combat, while in Japan, thousands of young people worked in armament factories and as suicide pilots. In the Soviet Union, teenagers as young as 16 or 17 joined the army to fight the German invasion.



Another example was the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, which highlighted to the international community the urgency of real action. It is estimated that around 20,000 children participated in hostilities during the 1990s, and many of them were involved in the atrocities committed during the genocide. Thousands of children joined armed groups, including street children who were forced to join. After the genocide, thousands of children were detained on suspicion of participating in atrocities, some of whom were imprisoned for several years without charges or fair trial.

Seeing the situation of children in conflicts and the lack of real protection, the international community made this matter a priority and made significant efforts to end this issue, through international legislation and cooperation. In 1996, the Graça Machel report was published, a comprehensive study on the impact of armed conflicts on children. This document shed light on the various ways in which children are affected by war, including recruitment as soldiers, sexual exploitation, forced displacement, and psychological trauma. It was a turning point in recognizing the problem and provided a solid foundation for future actions aimed at protecting children in situations of armed conflict. The mandate of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was created by the UN General Assembly in December of that same year to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflicts, raise awareness, promote the collection of information on the situation of children affected by war, and foster international cooperation to improve their protection.

In 1998, the first debate of the UN Security Council on children and armed conflicts took place. In a Presidential Statement, the Security Council expressed its support for the mandate of the Special Representative. The following year, in 1999, the first resolution on children and armed conflicts was adopted by the UN Security Council, placing the issue of children affected by war on the agenda of the Security Council (Resolution 1261). All these significant steps marked a milestone in the protection of children in areas of armed conflict.

Nevertheless, children's participation in armed conflicts continues to be a serious and persistent problem in many parts of the world. Children are still recruited, used as soldiers, and exposed to serious risks in conflict situations, requiring an urgent and coordinated response from the international community to protect their rights and ensure their safety and well-being. This challenge involves addressing not only the symptoms but also the



underlying causes of children's participation in war, such as poverty, lack of access to education, and social inequality.

Legal framework on children's rights

As the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) explains, international humanitarian law provides broad protection for children. In the event of armed conflict, either international or non-international, children benefit from the general protection provided for civilians not taking part in the hostilities. Non-combatant civilians are guaranteed humane treatment and covered by the legal provisions on the conduct of hostilities. Given the particular vulnerability of children, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (GCIII and GCIV) and their Additional Protocols of 1977 (API and APII) lay down a series of rules according to their special protection.

Having said this, children who take direct part in hostilities, for example 'child soldiers', do not lose that special protection. The 1989 Convention on the rights of the child and its Optional Protocol in particular, set limits on children's participation in hostilities.

Under the shadow of International humanitarian law, four fundamental principles, central in pursuing this aim to limit the effects of armed conflicts, arise:

1. The principle of humanity, which says that no person affected by an armed conflict will find themselves completely deprived of protection;
2. The principle of distinction between civilians and combatants, and between civilian and military objectives;
3. The principle of proportionality;
4. The principle of military necessity, related to the prohibition of superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering.

Following with the main jurisdiction on the matter, it is important to highlight that delegates should use this document as the start of their research, amplifying their knowledge in the number of legal tools regarding the topic here treated and how these can help to complete and modify the resolution presented.

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989**



This Convention was adopted by the General Assembly through the resolution 44/25 in November 1989. The main goal of this document was to define who children are, their rights, and the responsibilities of governments. Regarding the former, a child is considered any person under the age of 18, being this definition contradictory under some beliefs around the world that situate the start of adulthood way earlier.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, composed of 18 independent experts, is responsible for supervising the implementation of the convention by the states that have ratified it. Their governments are required to report to and appear before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child periodically to be examined on their progress regarding the advancement of the implementation of the convention and the status of child rights in their country.

- **Optional Protocol on the involvement of Children in armed conflict, 2002**

This legal tool aims to protect children from recruitment and be used to inflict hostilities. The Protocol was adopted by the General Assembly on 25 May 2000 and entered into force on 12 February 2002. By 2023, there were 173 parties. However, there are 17 countries that have neither signed nor ratified the protocol, and 7 states who have signed but are yet to ratify.

In the last decade, two campaigns were raised in relation to this protocol. In 2010, the UN Secretary-General launched the “Global Campaign for the universal ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocols to the CRC”. In addition to OPAC, the campaign aimed to achieve universal ratification of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC). Furthermore, in 2012, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict launched the campaign “Zero under 18”.

- **Geneva Conventions, 1949**

The 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 Additional Protocols establish that “children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault. The parties to the conflict shall provide them with the care and aid they require” (API Art. 77). They center the provisions for the protection of children on several main objectives —namely sheltering them from hostilities; maintaining family unity; and ensuring the



necessary care, relief, or protection for those caught in hostilities. The rules established for international armed conflict are more detailed than those for internal conflicts, but nothing prevents relief agencies from using the former as a framework for their work in situations of internal conflict.

The Geneva Conventions generally consider children to be all persons under the age of eighteen; however, they enumerate additional specific rights and guarantees for newborn infants and children under twelve and under fifteen. One of the main points of this Conventions is that it also covers the children arrested, detained, or interned for reasons related to armed conflict and states that they must benefit from special guarantees due to their age, their specific psychological and physiological needs, and the fact that they may not—in general criminal law—be tried for their crimes as adults.

- **Arms Trade Treaty, 2013**

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2013 to regulate international trade in conventional arms by establishing the highest international standards and to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms.

The ATT contributes to international and regional peace, security and stability, reducing human suffering, and promoting cooperation, transparency and responsible action among the international community. The adoption of the treaty represented the culmination of two decades of campaigning by a significant number of human rights and humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and those governments that championed it.

More than 15 years ago Graça Machel, the UN Secretary-General's expert on children and armed conflict, found that the proliferation of inexpensive and lightweight weapons made so widely available by the international arms trade was contributing to the unlawful recruitment of children and their use in hostilities.

Role of the international community

The United Nations

From the inception of the children and armed conflict agenda, and through collaborative work with partners, including, in particular, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the



United Nations Department of Peace Operations, and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, hundreds of thousands of children have benefited from improved protection, with over 170,000 children released from armed forces and armed groups and reintegrated into society. The signature of 37 joint action plans between the United Nations and parties to conflict has critically, although not quantifiably, prevented violence against children in situations of armed conflict in multiple contexts

Specifically, the United Nations Security Council identified and condemned at the resolution 1612/2005 the main six grave violations against children in times of war: Killing and maiming of children; recruitment or use of children in armed forces and armed groups; attacks on schools or hospitals; rape or other grave sexual violence; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access for children. The six grave violations form the basis of the Council's architecture, which consists in the mission to monitor, report and respond to abuses suffered by children in times of war. Ending and preventing these violations is also the focus of the Special Representative's work and advocacy on the matter.

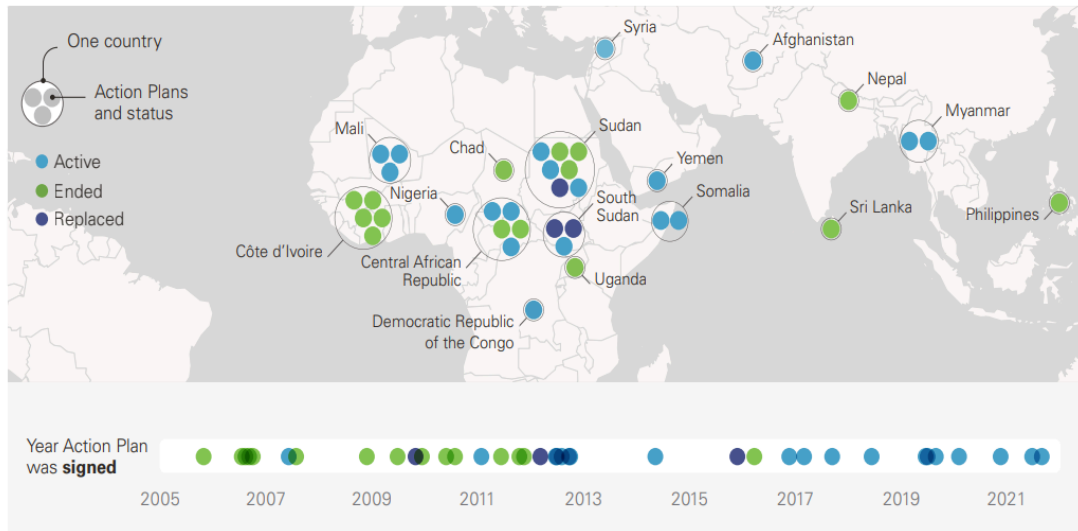
Finally, the development and adoption of political commitments has been key, specially in partnership with civil society organizations, to better protect children and prevent violations against them. Some examples are the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Paris Principles), the Safe Schools Declaration, and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers (Vancouver Principles).

Non-State and State parties in Internationalized conflicts

To bolster accountability, in its resolutions 1539(2004) and 1612(2005), the UN Security Council called upon parties to conflict listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict to develop and implement Action Plans to end and prevent grave violations against children.

Action Plans are developed with State and non-State actors alike, enabling the United Nations to engage in an impartial manner with all parties to conflict, in line with its core humanitarian principles. Since 2005, a total of 37 Action Plans have been signed by parties participant in 17 conflict situations. Most Action Plans were signed with non-State actors (26, 70%), followed by a lower percentage with State actors (11, 30%).

37 Action Plans signed with parties to conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children



This infographic presents all Action Plans signed between 2005 and 2021. Action Plans signed in 2022 are not illustrated in this image.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Collaboration with civil society is a vital part of the implementation of the mandate on children and armed conflict. Local and international non-Governmental organizations provide information on grave violations, undertake research and advocacy, and deliver services to children, including through vocational training and reintegration programmes.

The Special Representative is committed to fostering closer relations on this issue with non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) and has established a structure for consultation with NGOs at United Nations Headquarters level on monitoring and reporting as well as all other aspects of the agenda.

On March 16, 2022, Joint NGO Statement on Children and Armed Conflict was delivered by the Defence for Children International making diverse calls to action to States and the UN to improve the protection of children in armed conflicts.

The Resolution



United Nations

Security Council

Resolution

Modified by the C'MUN 2024 Academics Team for educational purposes only.

The Security Council,

Reaffirming its resolutions 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999, 1314 (2000) of 11 August 2000, 1379 (2001) of 20 November 2001, 1460 (2003) of 30 January 2003, 1539 (2004) of 22 April 2004, 1612 (2005) of 26 July 2005, 1882 (2009) of 4 August 2009, 1998 (2011) of 12 July 2011 and 2068 (2012) of 19 September 2012, and the Statements of its President on 24 July 2006 (S/PRST/2006/33), 28 November 2006 (S/PRST/2006/48), 12 February 2008 (S/PRST/2008/6), 17 July 2008 (S/PRST/2008/28), 29 April 2009 (S/PRST/2009/9), 16 June 2010 (S/PRST/2010/10) and 17 June 2013 (S/PRST/2013/8), which contribute to a comprehensive framework for addressing the protection of children affected by armed conflict,

Acknowledging that its resolutions 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2068 (2012) and the Statements of its President on children and armed conflict have generated progress in preventing and responding to violations and abuses committed against children, in particular in the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of thousands of children, the signing of action plans between parties to armed conflict and the United Nations and the delisting of parties to conflict from the Annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report,

Remaining however deeply concerned over the lack of progress on the ground in some situations of concern, where parties to conflict continue to violate with impunity the relevant provisions of applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict,

Recalling that all parties to armed conflict must comply strictly with the obligations applicable to them under international law for the protection of children in armed conflict, including those contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of Children in armed conflict, as well as the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977,

Noting that Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the right of the child to education and sets forth obligations for State parties to the Convention, with a view to progressively achieving this right on the basis of equal opportunity,





Expressing deep concern about the military use of schools by armed forces and non-State armed groups in contravention of applicable international law,

Expressing further concern regarding the high number of children that are being killed and maimed in conflict and post-conflict situations by landmines, explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and other unexploded ordnance,

Recalling the responsibility of all Member States to comply with their respective obligations to end impunity and to investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against children; and *noting* that the fight against impunity has been strengthened through the work on and prosecution of these crimes by the International Criminal Court, ad hoc and mixed tribunals and specialized chambers in national tribunals,

Acknowledging the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty and noting that in line with the provisions in Article 7(4) of the Treaty exporting States Parties shall take into account the risk of covered conventional arms or items being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of violence against children,

Reiterating its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and, in this connection, its commitment to address the widespread impact of armed conflict on children,

Stressing the primary role of Governments in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict, *recognizing* the importance of strengthening national capacities in this regard and *reiterating* that all action undertaken by United Nations entities within the framework of the monitoring and reporting mechanism must be designed to support and supplement, as appropriate, the protection and rehabilitation roles of national Governments,

Emphasizing the vital role of the United Nations, in consultations with international partners, to support national authorities in consolidating peace and in developing strategies for peacebuilding priorities,

Recognizing the crucial role of child protection advisers in mainstreaming child protection and leading monitoring, prevention and reporting efforts in relevant United Nations peacekeeping missions, political missions and peacebuilding offices in accordance with their mandate, including advice for and close cooperation and coordination between the missions, UNICEF and specialized NGOs for child demobilization and integration and prevention of recruitment,

Underlining the importance of providing military, police and civilian peacekeepers with adequate predeployment and in-mission training on mission-specific child protection issues and on appropriate comprehensive prevention and protection responses,

Recognizing the valuable contribution of relevant regional and subregional organizations and arrangements for the protection of children affected by armed conflict such as the African Union, the European Union, and the NATO, in close collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General,



The Security Council,

1. *Strongly condemns* all violations of applicable international law involving the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict, demanding that all relevant parties immediately put an end to such practices and take special measures to protect children;
2. *Calls on* Member States to devise ways to facilitate the monitoring of obligations and commitments relating to the protection of children affected by armed conflict;
3. *Stresses* the importance of regular and timely consideration of violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict;
4. *Recalls* the fact that the conscription or enlistment of children under the age of 15 or using them to participate actively in hostilities in both international and non-international armed conflict constitutes a war crime,
5. *Notes* that the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict requires State parties to set a minimum age of 18 for compulsory recruitment and participation in hostilities and to raise the minimum age for voluntary recruitment from that set out in article 38, paragraph 3, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
6. *Invites* the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to inform the Security Council about the different campaigns and programs taking place in the matter;
7. *Stresses* the need to exclude genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against children from amnesty laws and other similar provisions;
8. *Emphasizes* the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against children;
9. *Urges* concerned Member States, when undertaking security sector reforms, to mainstream child protection;



10. *Urges* further all parties concerned, including Member States, United Nations entities to support, bearing in mind national ownership, the development and strengthening of the capacities of national institutions and local civil society networks for advocacy, protection and rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict as well as national accountability mechanisms, including building investigative and prosecutorial capacities and the adoption of legislation criminalizing violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict;

11. *Recalls* the importance of ensuring that children continue to have access to basic services during the conflict and post-conflict periods;

12. *Reiterates* its deep concern about attacks as well as threats of attacks in contravention of applicable international law against schools and/or hospitals, expressing deep concern at the military use of schools in contravention of applicable international law, recognizing that such use may render schools legitimate targets of attack,

13. *Recalls* the obligations of all parties to an armed conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian law, to ensure that the wounded and sick, including children, receive, to the fullest extent practicable and with the least possible delay, the medical care and attention required by their condition;

14. *Recommends* that Member States include child protection in military training and standard operating procedures, as well as in military guidance as appropriate;

15. *Urges* relevant United Nations entities to continue to take concrete steps to reduce the impact of mines, unexploded ordnance and cluster munition and explosive remnants of war;

16. *Encourages* pertinent regional and subregional organizations and arrangements to help address the widespread impact of armed conflict on children;

17. *Decides* to remain actively seized of this matter.

As delegates convene to address the critical issue of children's rights, it is imperative to recognize the fundamental importance of safeguarding and promoting the rights of every child worldwide. This resolution aims to comprehensively address the multifaceted challenges faced by children, ensuring their protection, empowerment, and well-being across diverse contexts.

At the heart of this document lies a commitment to reaffirming the inherent dignity and rights of every child, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, or socioeconomic status. It underscores the need for comprehensive legislative frameworks,



robust institutional mechanisms, and effective enforcement mechanisms to ensure the realization of children's rights at all levels.

Key provisions of this resolution include:

1. **Protection from Violence and Exploitation:** Recognizing the alarming prevalence of violence, abuse, trafficking, and exploitation affecting millions of children globally, this resolution emphasizes the urgent need to strengthen legal protections, enhance law enforcement mechanisms, and promote awareness-raising initiatives to prevent and address these egregious violations.
2. **Access to Quality Education:** Acknowledging education as a fundamental right essential for children's holistic development and future prospects, this resolution calls for increased investments in inclusive, equitable, and quality education systems, with a particular focus on marginalized and disadvantaged populations, including children in conflict-affected areas, refugee and migrant children, and those with disabilities.
3. **Participation and Empowerment:** Recognizing children as active agents of change and key stakeholders in shaping their own destinies, this resolution underscores the importance of promoting meaningful participation, fostering civic engagement, and empowering children to voice their opinions, express their identities, and contribute to decision-making processes affecting their lives.
4. **Protection of Rights in Emergencies:** Given the disproportionate impact of humanitarian crises, conflicts, natural disasters, and pandemics on children's rights, this resolution emphasizes the need for robust emergency preparedness and response mechanisms, ensuring the provision of humanitarian aid, protection services, and psychosocial support to mitigate the adverse effects on children.
5. **International Cooperation and Accountability:** Recognizing the interconnected nature of children's rights and the imperative of global solidarity, this resolution calls for strengthened international cooperation, partnerships, and resource mobilization efforts to effectively address cross-border challenges and uphold children's rights universally. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of accountability mechanisms, data collection, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms to track progress, identify gaps, and hold duty-bearers accountable for their commitments.



While this resolution outlines crucial principles and actions to safeguard children's rights, it is essential to acknowledge that it may contain certain gaps and points of contention that warrant further deliberation and refinement. Additionally, the resolution's effectiveness may hinge on the feasibility of implementation, resource allocation, and the political will of member states. Therefore, delegates are encouraged to engage in constructive dialogue, propose amendments, and collaborate on strengthening the resolution to ensure its effectiveness in addressing the complex and evolving challenges facing children worldwide. By embracing a spirit of cooperation and inclusivity, delegates can enhance the resolution's impact and contribute to tangible improvements in the realization of children's rights globally.

Points of discussion

The resolution on children's rights addresses vital discussions and in this following section some areas will be tackled in order to give you some guidelines on the main issues to debate. Having said this, you are completely free to bring new topics to the table, enriching the conference and amplifying the power of the final resolution you will create.

Killing and maiming of children

Killing and maiming of children can be a result of direct targeting or indirect actions, including torture. This main issue can occur through crossfire, landmines, cluster munitions, improvised or other indiscriminate explosive devices or even in the context of military operations, house demolitions, search-and-arrest campaigns, or suicide attacks.

The prohibition of violence inflicted to civilians, including children, in particular murder, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture is a principle of customary international law, with universal applicability in all situations of armed conflict. As previously stated, the humanitarian principles of distinction and proportionality require fighters to distinguish between combatants and civilians, and they prohibit civilian damage beyond the scope of military advantage. However, because of the changing nature of conflict, this principle is eroding among armed forces and groups, and children are often killed and injured in the course of military operations, including in cross-fire, aerial bombardment and shelling.

Equally important are the landmines and other explosives that lead to maiming. Reports indicate that children are often injured or killed when their daily activities bring them in



contact with mines. For example, in Mozambique, a report of 2009 by the Landmine Monitor Report showed that six of the nine mine casualties that took place in 2008 were children who were playing in known contaminated areas.

Attacks on schools or hospitals

Any physical attack or threat of attack, targeted or indiscriminate, against schools or hospitals and protected personnel are strictly prohibited under international law, including, but not limited to looting, damaging, military use, destruction and attack on teachers or healthcare professionals.

The lack of shelters and safe spaces such as hospitals for children exposes them to violence and protection, nutrition, and health risks. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), diseases have more potential to cause fatalities than direct military conflicts in the long run, as the rates of infectious diseases are soaring. The cold weather, heavy rainfall, and subsequent flooding increase the risks of respiratory diseases, such as pneumonia and hypothermia, and waterborne diseases, including bacterial infections and diarrhea.

In Mali, a total of 69 attacks on schools (55) and hospitals (14) were attributed to unidentified perpetrators, Dan Nan Ambassagou and FLM (Macina Liberation Front), and involved the military use of schools, destruction and burning of school premises and equipment, threats, abduction, and killing of education and health personnel. As of end 2019, 1,113 schools remained closed, leaving more than 333,000 children out of school.

Sexual Violence

While grave violations affect boys and girls differently, girls are severely affected in armed conflicts. Whereas most children recruited and used for combat are boys, virtually all sexual violence is perpetrated against girls. Due to cultural norms and stigmatization, sexual violence remains vastly underreported (Mansour, 2022).

Sexual violence refers to any violent act of a sexual nature committed against a child, such as rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage or pregnancy, sexual harassment and assault, prostitution and last but not least, forced abortion.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sexual violence was perpetrated against 249 girls, mainly by government forces, with almost half committed in the residence of the victim or the



perpetrator. Attacks on girls returning from agricultural work or during military operations were noted. Of the 123 cases attributed to armed groups, 22 girls were used for sexual slavery, and 101 girls were raped.

Abduction of Children

The UN Peacekeeping training for the United Nations Military defines abduction as the unlawful removal, seizure, capture, apprehension, taking or enforced disappearance of a child, either temporarily or permanently, for the purpose of any form of exploitation. This threat is key because it is linked with the definition of genocide and can correlate these two phenomena, making it necessary to tackle by the international community applying new legal tools and worsening the magnitude of the offense.

To look at some data, the countries and regions presenting the highest numbers of children abducted in 2020 and 2021 were Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Burkina Faso, and the Lake Chad basin region, mostly affecting boys but with girls being increasingly targeted at an alarming rate.

On the other hand, the survivors of abduction face many other challenges that should not be forgotten. As Miss. Virginia Gamba, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, said: “Even when released or if they managed to escape their captors, abducted children continue to face major challenges regarding their reintegration back into their communities”.

Denial of basic needs

A huge debate revolves around what is to be considered a basic need, specially when speaking about children. International law has intended to define some of the most fundamental necessities, but when stating the main priorities, countries find themselves in endless discussions about what should and should not be included, as delegates can see in the clause 11 of the resolution here analyzed.

The United Nations Refugee Agency, one of the organs where the basic need approach seems more necessary, explained that basic needs go from food, shelter, energy, water, hygiene, education and add those specialized items for people with specific needs. One example related to this matter is the huge crisis now in Sudan, where millions of children



have been forced to flee from their homes in what is known at this moment as the largest child displacement crisis in the world.

In terms of international legislation, article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNGA, 1989) states that all children have the right to the best health care possible, clean water to drink, healthy food and a clean and safe environment to live in. All adults and children should have information about how to stay safe and healthy. Moreover, article 27 of the same document highlights the children's rights to have the right to food, clothing and a safe place to live so they can develop in the best possible way, adding the responsibility of the government, who should help families and children who cannot afford this.

Additionally, the United Nations have also established a more recent definition of basic needs through the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The 17 Goals are interconnected, apply to all countries, and need to be carried out by all stakeholders –governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and others– in a collaborative partnership.

Child soldiers

The thousands of children recruited and used in armed conflicts across the globe are often referred to as 'child soldiers'. In 2023, a UN Secretary General report presented 7,622 verified cases of children being recruited and used in armed conflicts in 23 countries. These children suffer extensive forms of exploitation and abuse, including sexual violence specially towards girls, that are not fully included in the definition of child soldier. Warring parties use children not only as combatants, but as scouts, cooks, porters, guards, messengers and more.

Why do children become part of armed forces? Some are abducted, threatened, coerced or manipulated by criminal actors. Others are driven by poverty, compelled to generate income for their families. Still, others associate themselves for survival or to protect their communities. For instance, in 2019, the United Nations verified that 1,495 children (1,442 boys, 53 girls) in Somalia, some as young as 8 years old, were recruited by armed groups and forces, 300 of them assigned in support roles, as escorts, guards at checkpoints, cleaners, etc. and 269 used as combatants.



Child participation and empowerment in conflicts

To facilitate children's real opportunities for participation, it is proposed that children need to be adequately empowered to liberate the child's autonomous voice and activate their powers of action. This involves an understanding of children as opinion-forming and social individuals, who play an active role in social relationships. It is important to understand that children and young people have the same general human rights as adults and also specific rights that recognize their special needs. Children are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. They are human beings and are the subject of their own rights.

There are multiple examples of child human rights defenders (CHRDs) from all horizons vibrantly advocating for the protection of human rights, the environment and social justice. In 2018, Child Rights Connect set up its first global Children's Advisory Team of 21 children to advise the planning and implementation of the Day of General Discussion of the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), focused on protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders. Child Rights Connect then supported a global Children's Advisory Team of nine child advisors in the development of UNICEF's official child-friendly UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Crimes against humanity and genocide

The conceptual difference between these terms is key to understanding its application in the international field and how children are affected by them. As it is well known, the existence of legally binding tools can help the protection of minors in conflict areas.

On the one hand, the origin of the term "crimes against humanity" is not clear among scholars. The UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect established two crucial moments where this concept or a very similar one was used. Firstly, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century it was used to describe the terrible acts committed by some countries in Africa amidst colonialism. On the other hand scholars such as M. Cherif Bassiouni (1999), mark the genesis of "crimes against humanity" in the 1915 Triple Entente Declaration condemning the mass killing of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.



These typologies of crimes have not yet been codified in a dedicated treaty of international law, unlike genocide and war crimes (UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, n.d). The definition and characteristics of the term can be found in the 1998 Rome Statute, specifically Article 7. Crimes against humanity include “acts [such as murder, extermination, deportation, enslavement, rape, apartheid...] when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack” (General Assembly Rome Statute, 1998). It is commonly said that in contrast with genocide (referred to in the same Statute, Article 6), these crimes do not target a specific group.

By the other hand, the 1948 UN Genocide Convention gives us the definition for one of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. The points 6.d and 6.e are specifically relevant for this topic due to the fact that they target the imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group and forcibly transferring children of one group to another.

Bloc Positions

Conflict zones around the world continue to pose significant threats to the well-being and safety of children. In 2021, Africa emerged as the region with the highest total number of children living in conflict zones (180 million children), closely followed by Asia (152 million children). Meanwhile, the Middle East continues to witness the highest proportion of children living amidst conflict (31% of all children in the region). Amidst these challenges, various regions have implemented strategies and policies aimed at safeguarding children's rights and mitigating the impact of armed conflicts on their lives.

Western Europe and North America

The promotion and protection of children's rights are paramount priorities within the European Union's (EU) human rights policy framework. The EU is committed to influencing both third countries and non-state actors to adhere to international and regional human rights norms, standards, and instruments, as well as international humanitarian law.

In pursuit of these objectives, the EU-ACP (African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States) Joint Parliamentary Assembly adopted a significant resolution on children and armed conflict



in June 2003. This resolution underscores the importance of addressing the plight of children affected by armed conflict and calls for concerted efforts to protect their rights and well-being.

Furthermore, the EU has developed its own comprehensive guidelines for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, adopted on 10 December 2007. These guidelines serve as a framework for EU member states and institutions to ensure that children's rights are upheld and respected in all relevant policies and actions.

In addition to the EU's efforts, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) has also recognized the importance of addressing the impact of armed conflict on children. The NATO Policy on Children and Armed Conflict reflects a commitment to adopting a human security approach, which recognizes that ensuring the well-being of children contributes to overall operational effectiveness and the achievement of lasting peace and security.

By prioritizing the protection of children's rights and integrating them into both policy frameworks and operational practices, the EU and NATO demonstrate their dedication to promoting a safer and more secure world for children affected by armed conflict. These initiatives underscore the importance of international cooperation and concerted action in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by children in conflict zones.

Africa

In Africa, particularly in Central Africa, the issue of child soldiers remains a profound and distressing reality. An estimated 120,000 children between the ages of 7 and 18 have been forcibly recruited or voluntarily joined armed groups, becoming embroiled in the brutality of armed conflicts that ravage the continent. Central Africa bears a disproportionate burden of this crisis, with more than 20,000 children coerced or enticed into participating in hostilities.

The recruitment of child soldiers is not limited to one side of the conflict; both government forces and rebel opposition groups are culpable. Government forces, in their pursuit of bolstering their ranks, have resorted to deceptive tactics, issuing false identity papers to children before enlisting them into either the regular armed forces or paramilitary units. For many vulnerable children, particularly those deprived of education and economic opportunities, joining armed groups may seem like their only means of survival or a path to a semblance of security in the midst of chaos.



Recognizing the urgent need to address the grave violations of children's rights in conflict zones, the African Union (AU) has undertaken steadfast efforts to safeguard the well-being of these vulnerable individuals. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, adopted in 1990, stands as a landmark legal instrument aimed at ensuring the protection and promotion of children's rights across the African continent. This charter provides a robust framework for member states to uphold the rights and welfare of children, including those affected by armed conflict.

In a further demonstration of its commitment to addressing the plight of children in conflict, the AU inaugurated the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts (APCAAC) in September 2021. This initiative represents a crucial step towards enhancing protection for children in conflict-affected areas. The APCAAC aims to combat various forms of violence and exploitation experienced by children in conflict zones, including killing and maiming, recruitment or use as soldiers, sexual violations, abduction, and attacks targeting schools or hospitals.

Through the combined efforts of legal frameworks such as the African Charter and concrete initiatives like the APCAAC, the AU strives to create a safer and more secure environment for children across Africa, particularly those who find themselves caught in the crossfire of armed conflicts in Central Africa. By addressing the root causes of child recruitment, providing support for reintegration and rehabilitation, and advocating for the rights of children, the AU endeavors to build a future where children can grow and thrive in peace and security.

Asia - Pacific

In South Asia, a region marked by significant military spending, there exists a troubling correlation between this investment and the proliferation of child soldiers. Despite the presence of a staggering 562 million South Asians living in absolute poverty, the region allocated a substantial \$14 billion to military expenditures in 1994 alone.

This disproportionate allocation of resources towards militarization exacerbates the socio-economic disparities within the region and contributes to the recruitment of children into armed conflicts. This phenomenon is exemplified by the disturbing findings of the 2022 report by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar. The



report revealed harrowing statistics, indicating that since the February 2021 coup, 382 children have tragically lost their lives, with over 1,400 children arbitrarily detained in Myanmar.

In response to the urgent need to address the plight of children affected by armed conflict, UNICEF's Regional Office for South Asia has launched proactive initiatives. Notably, the Capacity Building Project for Children Affected by Armed Conflict stands out as a comprehensive effort aimed at addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by war-affected children within the region. This project includes both secondary and primary research efforts to better understand the specific needs and vulnerabilities of these children.

Furthermore, initiatives such as the establishment of the ASEAN Children's Forum play a crucial role in amplifying the voices of children across member states. This forum serves as an official platform for children to express their views on issues affecting their lives, foster cooperation among nations for regional development, and advocate for children's rights in the region.

By prioritizing research, advocacy, and collaborative platforms, stakeholders endeavor to mitigate the devastating impact of armed conflict on the region's most vulnerable populations. These concerted efforts represent significant strides towards building a more peaceful and inclusive future for children affected by armed conflict in South Asia.

Eastern Europe

In Eastern Europe, despite a reduced number of armed conflicts compared to other regions, challenges persist regarding children's involvement in war and other forms of violence. For decades, the region has witnessed ethnic and political tensions triggering conflicts, such as those in the Balkans during the 1990s, leaving significant scars with many children participating as both soldiers and victims.

During the Balkans conflict, an estimated 20,000 children were recruited as combatants, with many more affected by direct or indirect violence. The persistent presence of armed groups and unregistered weapons remains a threat to children's safety in some Eastern European countries. Reports suggest over 15,000 light and small arms were still held by armed groups in the region as of 2020.



Limited access to quality education and economic opportunities increases children's vulnerability to exploitation and recruitment by armed groups or criminal gangs. Data shows up to 20% of children in some Eastern European countries lack access to formal education, exposing them to recruitment or involvement in illicit activities.

In the Russia-Ukraine conflict since 2014, over 3,500 children have been injured and at least 200 killed, with numerous cases of forced recruitment documented on both sides, increasing the risk of children becoming victims of war.

To address these challenges, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has played a crucial role in protecting children's rights in armed conflict. The CIS has adopted agreements and declarations, such as the Declaration on the Prevention of Child Soldier Recruitment in 1999, and implemented the Action Program for Children's Rights Protection in Armed Conflict since 2005, coordinating efforts to protect children in conflict zones.

In summary, despite efforts to rebuild and stabilize, persistent conflicts, unregistered weapons, and limited education and economic access continue to impact children's security and well-being in Eastern Europe. The CIS aims to address these challenges, ensuring a safe environment for children in the region.

Latin America & Caribbean

In countries like Colombia, Guatemala, and El Salvador, children have been recruited by illegal armed groups and forced to participate in violent activities. Additionally, the region faces challenges related to gang violence, where children are often compelled to join as a form of protection or survival in high-crime environments.

Protecting children's rights in Latin America and the Caribbean remains a significant challenge for governments and international organizations in the region. Concrete data reveals that thousands of children are affected by armed conflicts and violence each year. For example, in Colombia, it is estimated that over 8,000 children were recruited by armed groups between 2010 and 2020, with similar figures reported in other conflict-affected countries in the region.

Furthermore, gang violence has had a significant impact on children's lives in the region. According to data from the Violence Observatory of the National Autonomous University of



Honduras, over 2,000 children and adolescents were killed in Honduras in 2020, many of them victims of gang violence.

International organizations such as UNICEF and the Organization of American States (OAS) play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. UNICEF, for example, provides support for child protection programs and initiatives aimed at preventing the recruitment of child soldiers and facilitating the reintegration of these minors into society. An illustrative example of these efforts is the reintegration program implemented by UNICEF in several countries in the region, where children recruited by armed groups receive psychosocial, educational, and economic support. Meanwhile, the OAS works to strengthen legal frameworks and promote regional cooperation to combat organized crime and violence affecting children.

Relation with the SDGs

In the context of conflicts, children's rights face acute challenges, intertwining with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This section examines intersectionality, emphasizing the imperative of protecting children from the ravages of war while advancing SDGs, particularly those related to peace, justice, and partnerships.

SDG 1: End of poverty: Children participating in armed conflicts often come from impoverished and vulnerable environments. Communities affected by conflicts often experience high levels of poverty, which can lead children to be forced to join armed groups as a means of survival or as a result of recruiters' manipulation offering economic incentives.

SDG 4: Quality education: Armed conflicts severely disrupt children's access to education. Schools may be attacked, closed, or used for military purposes, depriving children of the opportunity to learn and develop. Lack of education can have long-term consequences on their personal development, skills, and future opportunities.

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth: Children may be recruited to participate in armed conflicts due to lack of economic opportunities and decent employment in their communities. In conflict-affected environments, lack of employment, extreme poverty, and insecurity can make children more susceptible to recruitment as fighters, either by state or non-state armed groups.



SDG 10: Reduced inequalities: Children in conflict situations often face extreme inequalities and human rights violations. Socioeconomic and gender inequalities are exacerbated in conflict contexts, leaving certain groups of children more vulnerable to exploitation, forced recruitment, and other forms of violence.

SDG 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions: This goal is particularly relevant to the issue of children in armed conflicts as it directly addresses the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. Protecting children's rights in conflict situations, punishing those responsible for recruiting child soldiers, and establishing effective judicial systems are key aspects of achieving peace and justice in these environments. Additionally, building strong and accountable institutions is essential for preventing future conflicts and ensuring the well-being of affected children.

Recommended readings

Abduction of Children in Armed Conflict: New Guidance Offers Tools for Monitors to Better Address One of the Most Complex Grave Violations of Children's Rights. United Nations (2022) [Link](#).

Manual for Child Protection Staff in United Nations Peace Operations (2019). Department of Peace Operations and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. United Nations [Link](#).

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Topic B. The Democratic Republic of Congo: displaced population and human rights

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), located in Central Africa, is the second-largest country on the continent by area and has a diverse landscape encompassing dense rainforests, vast savannas, and the Congo River basin. Rich in natural resources, the DRC has significant economic potential. Although its history is marked by colonization, dictatorship, and civil war, it remains culturally vibrant with over 200 ethnic groups. However, it has faced persistent challenges including political instability, armed conflict, and widespread poverty.

The country reflects the intricate connection between history, geography, and geopolitics and the vastness of its territory presents both challenges and opportunities for governance and development. To tackle the urgent challenges like displaced populations and human rights abuses, it's crucial to comprehend the complexities of the DRC with a focus on the most relevant stances to understand the conflict.

The DRC is home to a vast range of ethnic identities, each with its own cultural heritage and linguistic traditions, reflecting a tapestry of identities that enrich the nation's fabric. Yet, it also poses challenges to national unity as it has implications for governance: it necessitates inclusive policies to accommodate the various interests within the territory. Moreover, ethnic identity goes beyond the borders of a country, which may produce inter-state hostilities.

Natural resources abound in the DRC, ranging from minerals like cobalt, copper, and gold to fertile lands capable of sustaining agriculture. However, the exploitation of these resources and the scramble for control over lucrative mining sites has fueled armed conflicts, leading to the displacement of millions of Congolese citizens and widespread human rights abuses.

In light of these complexities, addressing the plight of displaced populations and upholding human rights in the DRC requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the need of short-term solutions for the most vulnerable victims and long-term measures that tackle the issue by its roots. As delegates of the General Assembly, it is imperative to understand the



urgency of the topic as it's an issue that failed to be resolved in the Security Council. Millions are displaced within the country, living in desperate conditions. Brutal human rights violations run rampant. Every passing day puts more lives at risk. The Assembly must act as a united voice condemning these atrocities and urging concrete action to protect civilians and find lasting solutions. Ignoring this situation could jeopardize not only regional stability but also international peace and security.

History of the topic

First and Second Congo War

The First and Second Congo Wars stand as two of the most devastating conflicts in modern African history, deeply rooted in a complex web of historical, ethnic, and political tensions.

The seeds of the First Congo War can be traced back to the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 that saw the mass slaughter of nearly a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus by extremist Hutu militias. In response to the genocide, the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) overthrew the Hutu government in Rwanda, sending waves of Hutu refugees, including perpetrators of the massacre, into neighboring Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC). The influx of refugees exacerbated long-standing ethnic tensions within the country which, combined with the political instability and economic turmoil under the rule of President Mobutu Sese Seko, set the stage for conflict.

The First Congo War (1996-1997) saw a coalition of Congolese rebel groups, backed by Rwanda and Uganda, rise up against Mobutu's regime. Laurent-Désiré Kabila emerged as the leader of the rebellion, ultimately overthrowing Mobutu and renaming the country the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, Kabila's rise to power did not bring stability to the region. Instead, it ignited the Second Congo War (1998-2003), drawing in a multitude of internal and external actors in what became known as "Africa's World War."

During the Second Congo War (1998 - 2003), the DRC became a battleground for a complex web of regional and international interests. Congolese rebel groups, including those backed by neighboring countries such as Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, vied for control over the country's vast mineral wealth. The involvement of these



external actors further fueled the conflict, prolonging the suffering of the Congolese people and resulting in millions of deaths due to violence, disease, and starvation.

The importance of ethnicity cannot be understated, as it was exacerbated by the legacy of colonialism and manipulation by political elites, which played a significant role in shaping alliances and driving violence. Moreover, the complex historical roots, political instability, and economic interests intertwine with the involvement of numerous internal and external actors. This way, the First and Second Congo War resulted into some of the deadliest and most protracted events in modern African history, leaving a legacy of suffering and instability that continues to impact the region to this day.

Set of peace agreements

The Set of peace agreements that emerged from the Congolese wars represents a multifaceted attempt to address the deep-rooted issues that fueled decades of conflict and instability in the territory. The Sun City Agreement (2002), also known as the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, aimed to establish a transitional government in the DRC and included representatives from the government, rebel groups, political opposition, civil society, and other stakeholders. Luanda Agreement (2002) was a supplementary accord to the prior and addressed the integration of rebel forces into the Congolese national army. Lastly, The Pretoria Accord (2003): Signed in Pretoria, South Africa, this agreement addressed issues related to the withdrawal of foreign forces from the DRC and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of combatants.

One of the key components was the establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions, which played a crucial role in addressing the legacies of violence, human rights abuses, and historical grievances that fueled the conflict. These commissions provided a platform for victims to share their experiences, seek justice, and promote reconciliation within Congolese society. While the effectiveness of these commissions varied, they served as an important step towards acknowledging the past and building a more inclusive future.

In tandem with truth and reconciliation efforts, the international community played a pivotal role in supporting peace and stability through the deployment of a renewed United Nations peacekeeping force. Following the failures of previous peacekeeping missions, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) was



established in 2010 with a mandate that included protecting civilians, supporting the disarmament and demobilization of armed groups, and facilitating political dialogue and reconciliation efforts.

Challenges persisted, however. The emergence of the March 23 Movement (M23), a rebel group formed by former members of the Congolese army who defected over grievances related to discrimination and marginalization, posed a significant threat to stability in eastern DRC. The M23's insurgency was supported by neighboring Rwanda and Uganda, which underscored the ongoing tensions and power struggles within the region.

In response to the escalating violence, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) approved the expansion of MONUSCO's mandate in 2013, granting the mission additional resources and authority to address the evolving dynamics of the conflict. This included a renewed support of the Congolese government in its efforts to address the root causes of conflict, and facilitating regional cooperation to address cross-border security challenges.

While the set of peace agreements and the establishment of institutions such as truth and reconciliation commissions and MONUSCO represented important steps towards peace and stability in the DRC, the road to lasting peace remained fraught with challenges.

Recent developments and current situation

In recent years, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has continued to grapple with a complex web of challenges. One of the most significant developments in the 21st century has been the proliferation of mining operations, particularly for metals essential in the production of advanced electronics, such as cobalt, copper, and coltan.

The mining industry in the DRC has drawn significant international attention due to concerns over human rights abuses, environmental degradation, and the financing of armed groups. While mining has the potential to contribute to the country's economic development, the reality is often marred by corruption. This way, local communities bear the brunt of these negative impacts, reflected in forced labor and exposure to hazardous working conditions that, as a consequence, result in facing displacement from their land.

International actors, including both state and non-state entities, have played a significant role in the DRC's, with special emphasis in the mining sector. China, in particular, has emerged



as a major player, investing heavily in mining operations and infrastructure projects, in part thanks to the selling of US mining business. Chinese companies have been accused of disregarding environmental regulations and human rights standards in pursuit of profit, exacerbating social tensions and contributing to conflict dynamics.

The European Union, on the other hand, has provided financial and logistical support to peacebuilding and development initiatives in the DRC. However, European companies have also faced scrutiny for their involvement in the extraction of minerals from the region, with calls for greater transparency and accountability in supply chains to prevent the financing of conflict and human rights abuses.

Meanwhile, the DRC has also experienced significant political shifts. In December 2018, Félix Tshisekedi was declared the winner of the presidential election, succeeding Joseph Kabila, marking the first peaceful transfer of power in the country's history. However, results were met with skepticism from some observers, who raised concerns about the credibility of the electoral process and alleged irregularities as well as political repression. Diplomatic pressure from Western powers and neighboring countries such as Rwanda and Uganda and the involvement of regional actors as the African Union and the Southern African Development Community in validating the election results further fueled debates on legitimacy.

In sum, the DRC ongoing challenges are deeply intertwined with the global economy and geopolitical dynamics. The exploitation of its mineral wealth, coupled with international investment and support to various actors, continues to shape the country's trajectory together with historical factors that still remain present.

Context and location

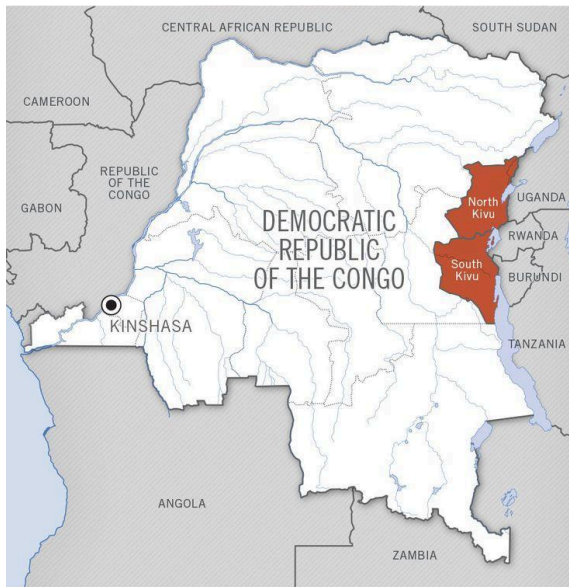
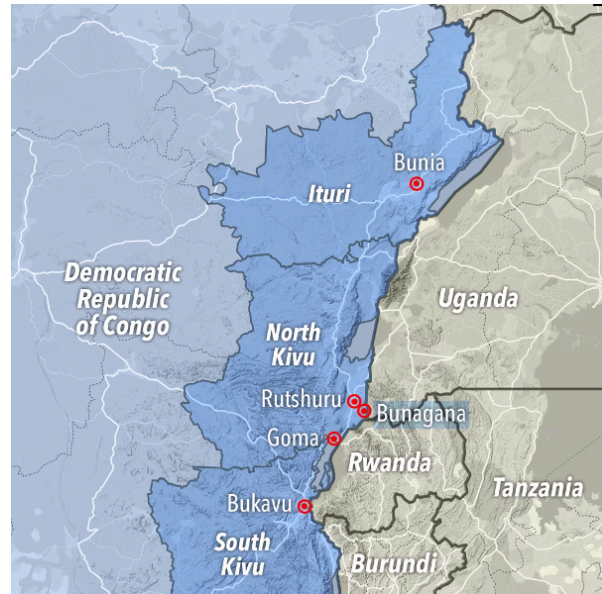


Figure 1: Democratic Republic of Congo. Source: ADF Figure



2: Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Source: VOA

The situation regarding the displacement of people stands as the main pressing concern, particularly in the eastern region of the country. This area, encompassing provinces such as North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri, has been plagued by decades of armed conflict, ethnic tensions, and resource-driven violence, leading to widespread displacement of civilians within and outside the territory. Cities such as Goma, Bukavu, and Beni have been significantly affected and may be considered a clear example of degraded living conditions.

According to recent estimates from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the DRC is home to one of the largest internally displaced populations in the world, with over 6 million people displaced within the country's borders.

In contrast, 1 million Congolese citizens seek asylum across Africa; mainly in Angola, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. The involvement of neighboring countries with weak relations with the DRC, including Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, further complicates the displacement crisis in the region. Border areas are particularly vulnerable to cross-border incursions and the spillover of violence, exacerbating displacement and humanitarian needs.



Additionally, the presence of refugees from neighboring countries seeking safety in the DRC adds another layer of complexity to the displacement situation, straining already limited resources and infrastructure. In that regard, the lives of many peoples rely on regional cooperation and coordinated measures.

Drivers of displacement and consequences

The complexity of the conflict has been already addressed in the Study Guide: displacement of population is as well driven by a complex interplay of factors, each contributing to the precarious humanitarian situation in the region. These drivers range from armed conflict and ethnic tensions to resource exploitation and environmental degradation, exacerbating vulnerabilities and forcing millions of civilians to flee their homes.

One of the primary causes is the presence of numerous armed groups vying for territorial control, resources, and political power. Conflict between these groups include clashes with government forces and the official army of the state, whose support varies according to political interests. The ongoing clashes between the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), and the Congolese military have led civilians to seek refuge in safer areas in North Kivu and Ituri provinces. It is crucial to consider the competing beliefs that lead the ADF and FDLR actions as well as the debate on the legitimacy of the state armed forces.

Deep-seated ethnic divisions and historical grievances fuel inter-communal violence. The main issues revolve around competition over land, political representation, and access to resources. In this case, the government's policies have proven insufficient to regulate matters related to property, mainly due to asymmetric information and lack of authority over certain groups. The clashes between the Hema and Lendu communities in Ituri province, for instance, reflect the need for adapted measures that adapt to the knowledge, culture and tradition of its peoples.

The scramble for control over these valuable mineral resources drives conflict and displacement, as armed groups and individuals seek to profit from illegal mining and trade. Additionally, large-scale land grabbing by powerful elites and foreign interests further marginalizes local communities, depriving them of their livelihoods and forcing them to either abandon their homes in search of better economic opportunities or to resort to illicit and



dangerous means to obtain some benefits. Strong institutions and reliable legal frameworks are needed to regulate the mining activity in a way that puts the focus on safeguarding human rights.

Environmental factors, including deforestation, soil erosion, and unpredictable weather patterns, contribute to exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. The lack of resilience, not only in the agriculture sector but also in infrastructures lead to food insecurity and loss of livelihoods, making displacement the most feasible solution to improve living conditions. Such logic ends up creating unsustainable processes that, far from reaching long-term and durable living conditions, contribute to the environmental degradation of the area. It is thus imperative to apply comprehensive solutions that tackle the issue from its roots and seek to create the conditions for the sustainable development of the communities in the region that can rely on the resources of their territories.

Finally, due to the causes of displacement, the consequences faced by the population are many and multi-faceted. Yet, when addressing the issue of Human Rights, the delegates of the UNGA may focus on the following aspects:

- **Food insecurity and malnutrition:** irregular displacements lead to the concentration of thousands not only in specified above. Scarcity is aggravated by unsustainable means of production, affected by poor environmental conditions.
- **Gender-based violence and sexual abuses:** violence is not only carried out by military means, as armed groups of rebels exercise harm on women as a means to achieve their objectives.
- **Poor health conditions and spread of diseases:** in line with last point, epidemics of sexually transmitted diseases with high risks of mortality stand as one of the main health problems in the region.
- **Cultural heritage and relocation:** on a more social basis, the uncontrolled displacement of population from their territories produce the erosion of local traditions and identities. This phenomenon is worsened by the separation of communities and families forced to adapt their way of life to temporal situations with the aim of surviving.



Bloc positions

It is difficult to define the specific positions of all the countries involved in the United Nations General Assembly, considering the number of participants in the debate. Therefore, we are going to provide a broad stance of the main geographical areas of the world, making emphasis on the most relevant actors in each.

Western European countries hold a more or less consensus position on the topic, reflecting shared values and perspectives. The EU has allocated funds through the European Development Fund to support development programs in the DRC as well as it provides direct humanitarian assistance. The Rural Development and Food Security Program in the DRC focuses on improving food security and living conditions in rural areas most affected by displacements.

Germany and France prioritize humanitarian aid and multilateral cooperation in addressing the displacement crisis. Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom typically align with broader European positions, emphasizing the need for coordinated action to address the root causes. Hungary, may prioritize security concerns and border control measures. Belgium, as a former colonial power in the DRC, maintains a keen interest in promoting stability and addressing human rights concerns, advocating for increased international assistance and diplomatic engagement.

In the case of **Russia**, they maintain a focus on sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states, often resisting external intervention or criticism of the DRC government's handling of the displacement crisis. On the other hand, while Russia may express concerns about the humanitarian situation and displacement of populations in the DRC, its approach generally emphasizes political stability and state sovereignty over human rights considerations.

Latin American countries exhibit a diverse range of positions, in order to deepen research on its stances it is important to consider the varying geopolitical interests and historical ties. It's worth mentioning the lack of joint action made through the Organization of American States in regards to the matter.



To summarize, Argentina supports multilateral efforts to address displacement and often advocates for increased international assistance. Haiti, as a fellow member of the African Union, prioritizes regional initiatives aimed at addressing conflict and calls upon solidarity among nations. El Salvador and Venezuela emphasize regional efforts and keep a critical stance on Global North-led intervention. This line is followed by the anti-imperialist convictions of Bolivia and Cuba, that express solidarity with the DRC government. Colombia, given its own experiences with internal displacement and conflict, may advocate for comprehensive approaches to addressing the root causes of the conflict. Guyana and Nicaragua may prioritize regional stability and security concerns, supporting diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts in the DRC while also advocating for respect for human rights and humanitarian principles.

Middle Eastern countries hold varying perspectives. While each country expresses concern for the humanitarian situation and advocates for the protection of human rights, their approaches differ based on geopolitical considerations. Whereas Israel supports international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance, Iran prioritizes addressing socio-political issues contributing to displacement. Saudi Arabia focuses on stability and security concerns, seeking diplomatic solutions to restore peace in the region. Iraq, having experienced its own displacement crisis, advocates for comprehensive approaches addressing both humanitarian needs and the root causes of displacement. Syria, solidarizes with displaced populations while emphasizing non-interference in internal affairs and advocating for diplomatic solutions. As for joint actions among these countries, the Arab League direct involvement seems unlikely, as no statement has been made addressing the conflict.

Asian and South Pacific countries offer a spectrum of perspectives and finding joint action is difficult. Armenia, with its own experiences of displacement, expresses solidarity with the displaced in the DRC and advocates for international support in a way that it can be also beneficial for its national interests. Afghanistan, under Taliban rule, is unlikely to prioritize intervention over sovereignty. Whereas the conflict is not within Pakistani interests and their statements are limited to encourage diplomatic efforts, India was a major contributor to the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC. Following the 2021 coup of Myanmar, internal turmoil of the country also shades any interest in the region. Vietnam is not directly involved in the conflict itself however called for greater efforts to protect civilians at the UNSC. Japan



focuses on providing humanitarian aid and supporting peacebuilding efforts rather than taking a strong stance on the conflict itself. Australia has condemned human rights abuses in the and supports African-led efforts to find a peaceful solution while actively supporting international efforts. China, prioritizing non-interference and sovereignty, may extend humanitarian aid while respecting the DRC's sovereignty and nurturing economic ties through development projects.

China's position on the DRC conflict is complex, as it is a major investor in the DRC's mining industry, and their focus is often on economic development through initiatives like the Belt and Road. The country generally avoids taking a strong stance on internal conflicts, following a policy of non-interference in other countries' affairs. Yet, China contributed financially to the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO).

In the **African continent**, The African Union has been involved in providing logistical and financial support to regional peacekeeping missions like the one led by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). They have also pushed for peace talks and conflict resolution, though critics argue the AU needs to take a stronger leadership role in ending the violence. Important and diverse stances have been made by countries. Kenya generally advocates for peaceful resolutions in the DRC, contributing troops to UN peacekeeping missions and urging dialogue between parties, though it has faced criticism for its own economic ties potentially fueling the conflict through mineral trade. Mali has not taken a strong public stance on the DRC conflict, likely due to its own ongoing internal struggles with armed groups; yet it would be in their interests addressing the root causes to face instability.

Rwanda, having historical ties with the DRC and experiencing its own refugee crises, Rwanda's position on the DRC conflict is complex due to its historical ties and the fact they are experiencing its own refugee crisis. They face accusations of supporting rebel groups like M23 despite calls for regional peace. Uganda's history with the DRC is checkered, having intervened militarily in the past and being ordered by an international court to pay reparations for exploiting resources during the conflict. They prioritize security concerns and support efforts to address the root causes of conflict. Nigeria generally promotes regional solutions and peaceful resolutions in the DRC, but its own economic interests in the region can be seen as conflicting with those goals. South Africa has played a complex role in the DRC conflict, historically deploying troops while also advocating diplomacy and facilitating



peace talks. Committed with human rights, they support AU initiatives aimed at resolving conflicts on the continent. Angola, having experienced its own conflicts and displacement issues, while also having a complicated history with the DRC, has previously intervened militarily to support the government but also scaling back involvement due to its own internal struggles.

Finally, the **United States** expresses concern about the massive displacement and human rights abuses in the DRC. It has provided humanitarian aid to displaced populations and supports the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO) working there. Additionally, the U.S. has implemented targeted sanctions against individuals and entities involved in human rights abuses and has supported efforts to promote peace, stability, and democratic governance in the region. However, the US has also faced criticism for not exerting stronger pressure on the Congolese government to address the root causes of the conflict, such as corruption and violence against civilians.

Relation with the SDG

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are highly relevant to the conflict in the DRC as they provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the underlying causes of the conflict and promoting long-term peace, stability, and development in the region. The SDGs offer a roadmap for addressing interconnected issues such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and lack of access to basic services, all of which contribute to violations of human rights, particularly those of displaced population.

SDG (2) End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture – violence and forced displacements have disrupted agricultural activities, leading to food insecurity and malnutrition. Although aid is crucial to alleviate the suffering of the victims, addressing agricultural challenges is vital to build resilience and ensure human rights protection in that regard.

SDG (3) Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages – the ongoing violence has severely disrupted healthcare services, resulting in limited access to medical care and essential resources for the displaced population. Human rights abuses, including sexual violence, further exacerbate the health crisis. Preventing the risk of spreading



diseases is essential not only for improving the life conditions of displaced people but also to reduce the number of deaths.

SDG (5) Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – the ongoing conflict has exacerbated gender-based violence, including sexual violence in refugee camps and exploitation in the mining industry, leading to profound human rights violations against women and girls. In such a vulnerable context, implementing measures of prevention is crucial to protect the rights and dignity of women and girls and empower them to gain agency. If the DRC is set to achieve peace, it cannot be done without counting on women.

SDG (8) Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all – the persistent violence has disrupted economic activities, hindered job creation, and undermined livelihoods, particularly for displaced populations. Yet, it is of huge urgency to address human rights abuses particularly in the mining sector, including forced labor and lack of security for workers. In that matter, it is crucial to ask for responsibility for those who benefit economically from the mining sector.

Taking into account the complexity of the conflict and the multiple implications it has for the development of the country, all SDGs could be considered in a resolution. We've selected the most relevant ones for the human rights crisis suffered as a consequence of tensions, yet we highly encourage delegates to explore other Goals that may be key for the overall resolution of the conflict, such as number 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) as well as number 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere)

Questions the resolution should solve

The multiple layers that make up the conflict require the delegates of the United Nations General Assembly to engage in negotiations that put the focus on comprehensive solutions that tackle, at the same time, circumstantial problems. This way, a good resolution should include both long-term and short-term solutions that address:



- 1) The systemic causes of the conflict, rooted in historical dynamics and the political instability of the state. Such include matters such as weak institutions, external relations with neighboring countries and the involvement of external actors in the economy of the country.
- 2) The implications for human rights, considering the displacement of population.

Bearing this in mind, some questions that the final resolution should answer are the following:

- How could the legitimacy of public authorities be strengthened? How could policies be effectively implemented among different ethnic communities?
- Is multi-ethnic coexistence feasible to improve? What could increase unity and cohesion among diverse identity groups?
- How can regional cooperation among neighboring states be encouraged? Are enhanced diplomatic relations achievable?
- Should third-parties and international actors present in the area take an increased responsibility?
- How can mining operations be regulated? Is it possible to improve working conditions?
- How could the displaced population face malnutrition and food insecurity?
- How could potential victims of gender-based violence be protected from its abusers? Is there a possibility to prevent it?
- How could medical assistance be increased in the area? Any measures to prevent the spread of diseases?
- Which UN Agencies could play in the field to assist the displaced population?



Recommended readings

AlJazeera. 2024. [A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo](#)

Lugova, Halyna. 2020. Sexual and Gender-Based [Violence Among Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Post-Conflict Scenario](#)

Jacobs, Carolien. 2018. [Everyday Justice of the Internally Displaced in a Context of Fragility: The Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo \(DRC\)](#)

Parens, Raphael. 2022. [Conflict in Eastern Congo: A Spark Away from a Regional Conflagration](#)

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