

# **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**

Background Guide Topic:

## **Protection of Children in Armed Conflicts**

Okinawa Model United Nations 2026

Beginner Committee

"Momentum: Navigating a Sea of Pandemonium"

## **Introduction to the Committee**

### **History of the Committee**

The United Nations Children's Fund — universally known by its original acronym, UNICEF — was established in December 1946 in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Its founding mandate was to provide emergency food, healthcare, and relief to children devastated by the conflict in Europe and China. In 1953, UNICEF became a permanent body within the UN system, broadening its mandate to address the long-term needs of children across the developing world. Since then, UNICEF has grown into the world's leading organization for children, operating in over 190 countries and territories.

UNICEF's work encompasses a wide range of priorities: improving access to quality education, ensuring child health and nutrition, promoting gender equality, strengthening child protection systems, and responding to humanitarian crises. In situations of armed conflict, UNICEF plays a uniquely critical role. It works to monitor violations against children, advocate for their protection, provide emergency assistance, support the rehabilitation of child soldiers, and help rebuild schools, hospitals, and protective systems in post-conflict environments.

UNICEF is also a key implementing partner of the United Nations' Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda — a framework for monitoring, reporting, and responding to grave violations against children in war. This mandate was launched in 1996 following the landmark Machel Report, which documented for the first time the full scale of harm armed conflict inflicts on children. UNICEF continues to be at the forefront of efforts to hold parties to conflict accountable and to ensure that children receive the protection and support they are owed under international law.

### **Introduction to the Topic**

War has always claimed children as its victims. Yet for most of human history, this was treated as an unfortunate but inevitable consequence of armed conflict. The modern international community has increasingly rejected this view, enshrining in international law the principle that children in conflict deserve special protection and that violations of their rights constitute serious breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Despite this legal evolution, reality remains deeply troubling. The year 2024 saw the highest number of verified grave violations against children in armed conflict ever recorded — 41,370 incidents affecting 22,495 children across 25 active conflict situations. The most prevalent violation was the killing and maiming of children, with 11,967 cases verified. Denial of humanitarian access reached alarming new levels, with 7,906 incidents, while 7,402 children were recruited or used by armed forces and groups. Attacks on schools and hospitals surged by 44 percent compared to the previous year, and sexual violence against children rose by 34 percent.

These numbers represent only verified incidents — the true scale of violations is almost certainly far higher, as access and security constraints frequently prevent documentation. Millions more children are affected in ways that are difficult to quantify: through displacement, malnutrition, psychological trauma, disrupted education, and the long-term erosion of their communities and futures.

The regions most severely affected span the globe. In 2024, the highest concentrations of violations were recorded in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (notably the Gaza Strip), the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Nigeria, and Haiti. In Myanmar, Sudan, Ukraine, and Syria, children continue to suffer the cumulative effects of prolonged, multi-year conflicts. Each of these contexts presents its own particular challenges — from state-perpetrated attacks on civilian infrastructure to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, from the mass recruitment of child soldiers to the systematic blockading of humanitarian aid.

What unites these crises is a common failure: the failure of parties to conflict to abide by international law, and the failure of the international community to enforce it. Delegates in this committee are asked to grapple with both of these failures — and to propose realistic, enforceable, and durable solutions.

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## Key Terms

### **Children in Armed Conflict (CAAC)**

Refers to the United Nations' comprehensive agenda for addressing the recruitment, use, and targeting of children in situations of armed conflict. The CAAC agenda is grounded in Security Council resolutions and is monitored through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM).

## **The Six Grave Violations**

As defined by the UN Security Council, the six grave violations against children in armed conflict are:

- Killing and maiming of children
- Recruitment or use of children by armed forces and armed groups
- Sexual violence against children
- Attacks on schools or hospitals
- Abduction of children
- Denial of humanitarian access for children

These six categories form the basis of all UN monitoring, reporting, and accountability efforts under the CAAC mandate.

## **Child Soldier**

Any person under the age of 18 who is or has been recruited or used by an armed force or group in any capacity, including but not limited to fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, and those used for sexual purposes. The Paris Principles (2007) stress that children may be associated with armed forces voluntarily, through deception, or through coercion, but regardless of circumstances, they are entitled to protection and support.

## **Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM)**

A UN Security Council-mandated system, established under Resolution 1612 (2005), for gathering timely and reliable information on the six grave violations against children in armed conflict. The MRM operates in conflict-affected countries and feeds into the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict.

## **Action Plans**

Formal commitments entered into by parties to conflict — both state armed forces and non-state armed groups — with the United Nations, outlining concrete steps to end and prevent specific grave violations against children. Action plans are a key accountability mechanism under the CAAC agenda, but fewer than 40 have been signed since 2005, despite the large number of listed parties.

## **Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)**

A process through which former combatants, including child soldiers, are disarmed, separated from armed forces or groups, and supported to reintegrate into civilian life. Effective DDR

programmes for children must be child-sensitive, addressing trauma, education, vocational training, and family reunification.

### **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)**

Also known as the laws of war, IHL is a body of law that seeks to limit the effects of armed conflict on people and places, particularly civilians. Key instruments include the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, which contain specific provisions protecting children.

### **Denial of Humanitarian Access**

The intentional deprivation or blocking of humanitarian assistance essential for children's survival by parties to the conflict. This includes attacks on aid convoys and personnel, arbitrary detention of humanitarian workers, and bureaucratic or administrative barriers to relief operations.

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## **Current Situation**

### **The Scale of the Crisis**

The situation for children in armed conflict has worsened dramatically over the past decade. Between 2005 and 2023, more than 347,000 grave violations against children were verified by the United Nations — and the pace of violations has accelerated sharply in recent years. The 2024 annual report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict documented 41,370 verified incidents, a 25 percent increase from 2023 and the highest annual total since the mandate began. This marks the third consecutive year of record-breaking violations.

Close to 19 percent of the world's children now live in conflict zones — nearly double the proportion recorded in the 1990s. This amounts to more than 473 million children worldwide. Conflict drives approximately 80 percent of all humanitarian needs globally, disrupting access to safe water, food, healthcare, and education. More than 52 million children in conflict-affected countries are estimated to be out of school, while malnutrition among children in conflict zones has risen to alarming levels.

### **The Six Grave Violations: Current Trends**

#### **Killing and Maiming**

The most prevalent grave violation in 2024 was the killing or maiming of 11,967 children across conflict situations. The most severe concentrations were in the Gaza Strip, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Myanmar. The increasing use of explosive weapons — including airstrikes, artillery, and landmines — in populated areas has dramatically increased child casualties. Children are also disproportionately harmed by explosive remnants of war long after active hostilities cease.

### **Recruitment and Use of Children**

In 2024, 7,402 children were verified as recruited or used by armed forces and groups — though the real number is almost certainly higher. Child recruitment remains most severe in the DRC, Somalia, Myanmar, and parts of the Sahel region of Africa. Children are used not only as fighters but also as porters, spies, cooks, messengers, and sexual slaves. Girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and forced marriage within armed groups.

### **Attacks on Schools and Hospitals**

Attacks on schools and hospitals surged by 44 percent in 2024 compared to the previous year. Schools and hospitals, which should be protected spaces under international humanitarian law, are increasingly treated as military targets or used as military bases. In Myanmar, 217 attacks on schools and 141 instances of military use of schools were verified in 2023 and 2024 alone. In Gaza, over 95 percent of schools have been damaged or destroyed since October 2023, depriving more than 658,000 children of access to education. The military use of educational and medical facilities not only endangers children directly, but also degrades these institutions for years after the conflict ends.

### **Sexual Violence**

Sexual violence against children in armed conflict rose by 34 percent in 2024. It is used by some parties as a deliberate weapon of war to terrorize communities and break social bonds. Girls bear the greatest burden, though boys are also targeted. The true scale of conflict-related sexual violence is vastly underreported due to stigma, fear, and lack of access to reporting mechanisms. In Haiti, the collapse of governance and surge in gang violence produced a 1,000 percent increase in reported incidents of sexual violence against children in 2024 alone.

### **Abduction**

Abduction is often the precursor to other violations, particularly recruitment, use, and sexual violence. Children abducted by armed groups face compounded, overlapping harms. In 2024, the number of children subjected to multiple simultaneous violations increased by 17 percent, reflecting an alarming escalation in the brutality of armed actors.

## **Denial of Humanitarian Access**

Denial of humanitarian access reached an unprecedented scale in 2024, with 7,906 verified incidents. Parties to the conflict attacked aid convoys, arbitrarily detained humanitarian workers, imposed bureaucratic barriers, and interfered with relief operations — leaving children without healthcare, food, clean water, and protection services. More humanitarian workers, including UN personnel, were killed in 2024 than in any previous year on record.

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## **Case Studies**

### **Subtopic I: Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Forces**

#### **Case Study 1: Democratic Republic of the Congo**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo represents one of the most protracted and severe cases of child recruitment and use in the world. Decades of overlapping armed conflicts in the country's eastern provinces — particularly North and South Kivu — have made children a persistent target for recruitment by the more than 100 armed groups that operate in the region.

A 2024 report by the UN Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the DRC documented an 8 percent rise in verified violations compared to the preceding reporting period, with 4,006 children forcibly recruited into armed groups — the most prevalent violation. Armed groups were responsible for 98 percent of these violations. The report also recorded a sharp increase in child casualties, with 1,298 children killed or maimed. Massacres, mass displacement, and attacks on civilian infrastructure have intensified, particularly in areas controlled by armed groups such as M23 and CODECO.

Despite this dire situation, some progress has been made. The DRC government has continued implementing its 2012 Action Plan with the United Nations, aimed at preventing the recruitment and use of children by its own armed forces. Joint screening mechanisms between the UN and the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) have helped identify and exclude underage recruits from military ranks. In 2017, the UN removed the FARDC from its list of state armed forces that recruit and use child soldiers — a significant milestone, though recruitment by non-state armed groups remains endemic.

The DRC case illustrates a fundamental tension in addressing child recruitment: state armed forces may make progress through action plans and UN engagement, while dozens of non-state armed groups — many of which lack any formal engagement with the international community — continue to recruit children with near-total impunity. Sustainable solutions will require not only action plans but also long-term DDR programming, community-based child protection, and accountability mechanisms for non-state actors.

### **Case Study 2: Myanmar**

Myanmar has been among the highest-ranking countries for grave violations against children for over a decade. Following the military coup in February 2021, the situation deteriorated dramatically. The military junta — known as the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) — initiated widespread crackdowns on civilian populations and armed resistance groups, leading to a proliferation of armed actors and an escalation in violations against children across the country.

A 2025 UN report on children and armed conflict in Myanmar documented a sharp increase in violations during the most recent reporting period. Recruitment and use of children accounted for 40 percent of all verified violations, with nearly 2,200 children recruited, primarily by the MAF and various ethnic armed organizations. Killing and maiming of children accounted for 30 percent of violations. In 2024 alone, at least 600 children were killed or injured.

Attacks on schools have been particularly devastating. In 2023 and 2024, the UN verified 217 attacks on schools and 141 instances of their military use. More than 5 million children in Myanmar are now out of school — a collapse that leaves them profoundly vulnerable to recruitment, exploitation, and abuse. The militarization of schools by the MAF — using them as military bases and detention centers — has compounded this harm.

Myanmar signed a joint action plan with the United Nations in 2012 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. While 262 children were released from armed forces and groups during a recent reporting period, implementation of the action plan has slowed significantly since the 2021 coup. The MAF's continued listing in the Secretary-General's annexes, combined with the lack of accountability mechanisms, illustrates the limits of voluntary action plans when parties to conflict lack genuine political will to comply.

### **Subtopic II: Attacks on Schools and Hospitals**

#### **Case Study 1: Gaza Strip (Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory)**

The conflict in the Gaza Strip, which escalated sharply in October 2023, has produced some of the most severe violations against children documented in the history of the CAAC mandate. In 2024, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory recorded the highest number of grave violations of any country or territory in the world.

By October 2024 — the one-year mark of the escalation — at least 14,000 children had reportedly been killed, with thousands more injured and an estimated 17,000 children unaccompanied or separated from their caregivers. Over 58,000 children have lost one or both parents since hostilities began. According to UNICEF, over 95 percent of schools in the Gaza Strip have been damaged or destroyed, with 658,000 children out of school for more than a year. Children's education is projected to be set back by up to five years. Every university in Gaza has been destroyed. In July 2024, poliovirus type 2 was detected in Gaza for the first time in 25 years, a direct consequence of the collapse of the health system.

The denial of humanitarian access in Gaza has also reached catastrophic levels. All 2.1 million people in the Gaza Strip face a critical risk of famine, with one in five already experiencing starvation-level conditions. UNICEF convoys have come under fire while delivering aid to children. Schools serving as displacement shelters have been repeatedly struck, killing both displaced families and the children sheltering within them.

Gaza illustrates the catastrophic harm caused by the large-scale use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas — a pattern that international humanitarian law explicitly prohibits. It also demonstrates the compounding effect of multiple simultaneous violations: children in Gaza face killing, maiming, denial of humanitarian access, attacks on schools and hospitals, malnutrition, disease, psychological trauma, and forced displacement — often all at once.

### **Case Study 2: Somalia**

Somalia has been among the top five countries for grave violations against children for over a decade, with the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism consistently documenting high rates of killing and maiming, recruitment and use, sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals. Al-Shabaab, the Islamist armed group, remains the primary perpetrator of grave violations, though federal and regional government forces have also been implicated.

Recruitment and use of children by Al-Shabaab continues at scale, with the group forcibly conscripting boys from villages and schools. Children recruited by Al-Shabaab are subjected to

indoctrination, military training, and deployment in combat, and face profound difficulties reintegrating into civilian life, given the stigma attached to association with the group. Attacks on schools — both physical destruction and threats to teachers and communities — have severely disrupted access to education in conflict-affected regions.

The Somali government has taken some steps toward compliance with the CAAC agenda, ratifying both ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The government has also developed coordination mechanisms for child protection. However, enforcement remains weak, inspections are infrequent, and many policies do not address all harmful forms of violations, particularly trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Somalia continues to receive an assessment of minimal advancement in eliminating the worst forms of violations against children.

Somalia's ongoing humanitarian crisis — compounded by climate shocks, drought, and displacement — illustrates how fragile states become particularly dangerous environments for children. When governments lack the capacity or will to enforce child protection laws and international obligations, children face violations from multiple armed actors with near-total impunity.

### **Subtopic III: Accountability and Legal Frameworks**

#### **Case Study 1: International Criminal Court Prosecutions**

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has played a pivotal role in establishing accountability for the recruitment and use of child soldiers as a war crime under international law. The most prominent case involved Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, a Congolese warlord who was convicted in 2012 for the recruitment and use of children under 15 in the DRC — the ICC's first ever conviction. Subsequent cases have prosecuted commanders in the DRC, Mali, and the Central African Republic for child recruitment and related violations.

These prosecutions have established critical legal precedents: that the recruitment of child soldiers is a war crime; that commanders can be held criminally responsible for violations committed by forces under their effective command; and that international courts can and will prosecute these violations. However, ICC prosecutions are limited in number, slow-moving, and require state cooperation for the arrest and transfer of suspects. Many perpetrators — including

non-state actors and those in countries that have not accepted the Court's jurisdiction — remain beyond its reach.

The case for accountability is also made by national courts. In Uganda, for example, the domestic prosecution of former child soldier Thomas Kwoyelo for crimes committed as a commander in the Lord's Resistance Army has been a significant, if contested, step toward justice. These cases demonstrate the potential for national accountability mechanisms as a complement to international ones.

### **Case Study 2: The "List of Shame" and Action Plans**

One of the most distinctive accountability mechanisms under the CAAC mandate is the Secretary-General's annual list of parties to conflict that commit grave violations against children — often called the "list of shame." Parties are listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report when they are verified to have committed one or more of the six grave violations. Listing triggers engagement processes aimed at securing commitments from listed parties to adopt action plans to end the violations.

Since 2005, only 37 action plans have been signed by parties to conflict — a figure that the UN itself describes as shockingly low given the stakes. Action plans have had meaningful successes in some contexts: the FARDC's removal from the list in 2017 following implementation of its action plan is one example. Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces were temporarily delisted in 2016, though they were subsequently relisted. Non-state armed groups have also signed action plans in contexts including Somalia, South Sudan, and the Philippines.

However, the action plan mechanism suffers from significant weaknesses. It depends on the political will of the listed parties to engage with the UN, which is often absent. It lacks enforcement mechanisms: a party that signs an action plan and then fails to implement it faces no automatic consequence beyond continued listing. And it does not address accountability for past violations — it is prospective only, focused on future behavior.

Delegates should consider how the action plan mechanism can be strengthened, what consequences should attach to non-compliance, and how parties that refuse to engage can nonetheless be held accountable.

## **Past Actions**

### **1. The Machel Report (1996)**

The foundational moment for the modern CAAC agenda was the 1996 report by Graca Machel, then Special Expert on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, presented to the UN General Assembly. The report documented for the first time the catastrophic and disproportionate impact of war on children, and called for concrete and comprehensive international action. The report led directly to the creation of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and laid the groundwork for all subsequent UN action in this area.

### **2. UN Security Council Resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict**

The Security Council has adopted a series of landmark resolutions that collectively form the legal and institutional backbone of the CAAC agenda. Resolution 1261 (1999) was the first to address children and armed conflict as a matter of international peace and security. Resolution 1612 (2005) was transformative: it established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations, created the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and introduced the "list of shame" — a system for naming parties to conflict that recruit and use children and triggering accountability processes against them.

Resolution 1882 (2009) expanded the listing criteria to include parties responsible for killing and maiming of children and for rape and other forms of sexual violence — significantly broadening the scope of accountability. Resolution 1998 (2011) further expanded the listing to include parties responsible for attacks on schools and hospitals, and called for greater protection of educational and medical facilities.

Resolution 2601 (2021) called specifically on parties to conflict to protect schools from attack and to refrain from using them for military purposes, and urged states to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

### **3. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Optional Protocol**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, with 196 state parties. It establishes comprehensive rights for children, including the right to protection from armed conflict (Article 38). The Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000) raised the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities

and for compulsory recruitment to 18, and prohibited non-state armed groups from recruiting or using anyone under 18 in any capacity. It has been ratified by over 170 states.

#### **4. The Paris Principles (2007)**

The Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, endorsed by 105 countries, provide a comprehensive framework for preventing the recruitment of children, protecting children associated with armed forces or groups, and supporting their release and reintegration. The Paris Principles emphasize that any child associated with an armed force or group — regardless of role, gender, or circumstance — is a victim and must be treated as such, never prosecuted for crimes they may have been compelled to commit as a child.

#### **5. The Safe Schools Declaration**

Adopted in 2015 and now endorsed by over 115 countries, the Safe Schools Declaration is an intergovernmental political commitment to protect education during armed conflict. It calls on endorsing states to collect data on attacks on education, to use the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use, and to prosecute those responsible for attacks on educational facilities. The Declaration is not legally binding, but endorsement creates political pressure for compliance and accountability.

#### **6. UNICEF's Child Protection Programmes**

UNICEF operates child protection programmes in virtually every conflict-affected context globally. These programmes include monitoring and documenting grave violations, supporting national child protection systems, training social workers, teachers, and community actors, delivering psychosocial support to conflict-affected children, facilitating the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups, and providing emergency education in conflict settings. UNICEF has also championed the strengthening of social service workforces — the frontline workers who identify, support, and protect children at risk — as a central strategy for sustainable child protection.

#### **7. The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM)**

Established by Resolution 1612 (2005) and operational in over 20 conflict situations, the MRM is the UN's primary system for gathering reliable information on grave violations against children. Country-level teams — led by UNICEF and including UN peacekeeping missions, UN agencies, and NGO partners — systematically collect, verify, and report on violations. This information feeds into the Secretary-General's annual report and country-specific reports, which

in turn trigger action by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The MRM has been credited with generating unprecedented accountability, though access and security constraints continue to limit its reach in the most dangerous contexts.

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## Questions to Consider

Delegates are encouraged to research their country's position on the following questions as they prepare for the committee:

- What is the situation of children in armed conflict in your represented country, and what steps has it taken to fulfill its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocol, and other relevant instruments?
- How can the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism be strengthened to improve coverage, timeliness, and response — particularly in contexts where access is severely restricted?
- What consequences should the international community impose on parties to conflict that commit grave violations against children and refuse to engage with accountability processes?
- How can the action plan mechanism be reformed to improve implementation rates and to ensure that signing an action plan leads to genuine, measurable change?
- How should the international community address the particular challenges posed by non-state armed groups, many of which operate outside any formal legal or diplomatic framework?
- What role can regional organizations — such as the African Union, ASEAN, or the Arab League — play in strengthening child protection in armed conflict within their regions?
- How can access to education be maintained and protected for children living in conflict zones, and how should the international community respond to attacks on schools?
- What more can be done to support the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of child soldiers, including addressing the specific needs of girls and children who have been subjected to sexual violence?
- How should states balance accountability for grave violations — including prosecution of perpetrators — with the imperative to protect and rehabilitate child survivors and former child combatants?
- What can developed countries do to strengthen the capacity of states in conflict to protect children, without undermining national sovereignty or creating dependencies?

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## Tips from the Chairs

As you prepare for the conference, please keep the following in mind:

Research your country's specific obligations and record. Look up whether your country has ratified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, and engaged with ILO conventions relevant to children in conflict. Consider whether your country is itself affected by conflict, or whether it is a donor, a troop-contributing country to peacekeeping missions, or a member of regional bodies with a role in conflict resolution.

Engage with the complexity of the issue. Child protection in armed conflict involves genuine tensions: between accountability and peace negotiations, between sovereignty and international enforcement, between the urgency of humanitarian response and the long-term work of prevention. Strong delegates will engage with these tensions honestly, rather than treating them as simple problems with simple solutions.

Think beyond condemnation. It is easy and important to condemn violations. But the most productive debate will focus on mechanisms, resources, and political arrangements that can make a practical difference for children on the ground. Ask yourself: what specifically would change if your proposed resolution were adopted and implemented?

Prepare your speeches in advance. Clear, focused speeches that reflect your country's genuine position — rather than generic statements — will contribute the most to productive debate. Use the background guide as a starting point, but conduct your own research to develop a sophisticated, well-sourced position.

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## Guidelines for Position Papers

Position papers must clearly articulate the current situation relevant to your country, briefly explain the past actions it has taken, and further outline possible solutions. Papers may reference international resolutions and multilateral strategies, but the main focus must be on your country's specific context and position.

When developing your position paper, please focus on information that directly relates to the topic of the protection of children in armed conflict. General information about your country — such as its geographical location, major cities, or trade statistics — should not be included to lengthen your paper. Position papers should be concise, specific, and persuasive.

Effective position papers typically address the following:

- Your country's current situation with respect to children in armed conflict — either as a country directly affected by conflict, a troop-contributing nation, a major donor, or a state with relevant legal or political obligations.
- Your country's record of ratification of relevant international instruments, including the CRC, its Optional Protocols, and relevant ILO conventions.
- Past actions taken by your country to address child protection in armed conflict, including domestic legislation, contributions to UN peacekeeping or humanitarian operations, and any relevant bilateral or multilateral engagements.
- Concrete policy proposals that your delegation will advocate for in committee, grounded in your country's position and interests.

Please avoid vague language. "We call on all parties to protect children" is not a policy proposal — it is a statement of intent. Effective position papers and speeches propose specific mechanisms, timelines, and accountability measures.

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## **Closing Remarks**

Thank you for reading this background guide and for your commitment to engaging seriously with one of the most urgent human rights issues of our time. The protection of children in armed conflict is not a niche issue — it lies at the intersection of international law, humanitarian action, peace and security, and the most fundamental values the United Nations was created to uphold.

The statistics in this guide represent real children — children who have been deprived of their education, their families, their safety, and, in far too many cases, their lives. As delegates, you have the opportunity to engage with their situation seriously, to debate the best means of protecting them, and to draft resolutions that could, if implemented, make a difference.

We look forward to your ideas, your research, and your contributions to this debate. Please feel free to reach out to the dais with any questions as you prepare. We wish you a productive and meaningful conference.

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