



THESSISMUN 2007

THESSALONIKI INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
MODEL UNITED NATIONS

United Nations General Assembly 3rd Committee Topic Area A

Elimination of children's abuse, ill-treatment and racial discrimination:

- 1. Promotion and protection of the rights of children*
- 2. Revision and observation over children's rights legislation*
- 3. Rehabilitation of the abused and violated children.*



UNIVERSITY OF MACEDONIA
THESSALONIKI, GREECE

WWW.UOM.GR/MUN - WWW.THESSISMUN.ORG



First of all I would like to welcome you to the third Committee and to wish you an interesting and fruitful session. Before you start looking for information about the policy of your member states it would be wise to have a look at the study guide first.

Definitions

Before we start let's see what the definition of the phrase child abuse is.

- **Child abuse** can be defined as causing or permitting any harmful or offensive contact on a child's body; and, any communication or transaction of any kind which humiliates, shames, or frightens the child. Some child development experts, go a bit further, and define child abuse as any act or omission, which fails to nurture or in the upbringing of children.
- Another definition by the **Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act** defines child abuse and neglect as: "at a minimum, any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm."

A child of any age, sex, race, religion, and socioeconomic background can fall victim to child abuse and neglect. Major types of child abuse are: Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, & Sexual child Abuse, Neglect. (Physical neglect, educational neglect, emotional neglect)

Emotional Abuse (*also known as: verbal abuse, mental abuse, and psychological maltreatment*)

Includes acts or the failures to act by parents or caretakers that have caused or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders. This can include parents/caretakers using extreme and/or bizarre forms of punishment, such as confinement in a closet or dark room or being tied to a chair for long periods of time or threatening or terrorizing a child. Less severe acts, but not less damaging are belittling or rejecting treatment, using derogatory terms to describe the child, habitual scapegoating or blaming.



Neglect:

The failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational, or emotional. Physical neglect can include not providing adequate food or clothing, appropriate medical care, supervision, or proper weather protection (heat or coats). It may include abandonment. Educational neglect includes failure to provide appropriate schooling or special educational needs, allowing excessive truancies. Psychological neglect includes the lack of any emotional support and love, never attending the child, spousal abuse, drug and alcohol abuse including allowing the child to participate in drug and alcohol use.

Physical Abuse

The inflicting of physical injury upon a child. This may include, burning, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating, or otherwise harming a child. The parent or caretaker may not have intended to hurt the child, the injury is not an accident. It may, however, been the result of over-discipline or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age.

Sexual Abuse

The inappropriate sexual behavior with a child. It includes fondling a child's genitals, making the child fondle the adult's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism and sexual exploitation. To be considered child abuse these acts have to be committed by a person responsible for the care of a child (for example a baby-sitter, a parent, or a daycare provider) or related to the child. If a stranger commits these acts, it would be considered sexual assault and handled solely by the police and criminal courts.

Commercial or other exploitation

Commercial of other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution.



These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.

Ill-treatment

The definition of the word **ill-treatment** is synonym of that of the word abuse but states a general term for the *use* or *treatment* of something (person, thing, idea, etc.) that causes some kind of harm (to the abused person or thing, to the abusers themselves, or to someone else) or is unlawful or wrongful. Its close synonyms are **mistreatment** and **maltreatment**. The word "misuse" has a more distant meaning of incorrect, uneducated use, not necessarily harmful.

Ill-treatment can be created by something as simple as life under pressure, loneliness, etc. Either **abuse** or **ill – treatment** may be direct and overt, or may be disguised and covert.

Racial discrimination

Last but not least as for the definition of **racial discrimination**, there are differences in treatment of people on the basis of characteristics which may be classified as racial, including **skin color and place of birth**. While this usually refers to discrimination against minority racial groups in Western societies, it can also refer to the opposite situation, and in that case is often called reverse discrimination when it is due to affirmative action or other attempts to remedy past or current discrimination against minority racial groups. However, reverse discrimination is relatively rare and far less common than the direction which discrimination is usually practiced, majority against minority.

A number of international treaties have sought to end racial discrimination. The United Nations uses the definition of racial discrimination laid out in the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* and adopted in 1966:

...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and



fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

In 2000, the European Union banned racism along with many other forms of social discrimination: "Article 21 of the charter prohibits discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, disability, age or sexual orientation and also discrimination on the grounds of nationality."

The Declaration on the Right of the Child (CRC)

Children suffer many of the same human rights abuses as adults, but may also be targeted simply because they are dependent and vulnerable. Children are tortured and mistreated by state officials; they are arbitrarily or lawfully detained, often in appalling conditions; in some countries they are subjected to death penalty. Countless thousands are killed or maimed in armed conflicts, many more have fled their homes to become refugees. Children forced by poverty or abuse to live on the streets are sometimes detained, attacked and even killed in the name of social cleansing. Many millions of children work at exploitative or hazardous jobs, or are the victims of child trafficking and forced prostitution. Because children are "easy targets", they are sometimes threatened, beaten or raped in order to punish family members who are not as accessible. The international community has long recognized the need to protect children from such abuses. The 1959 UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child set out ten principles which provided a powerful moral framework for children's rights, but which were not legally enforceable. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, and entered into force the following year. Since then, the CRC has been ratified by every single UN member state in the world, **except Somalia** -- which has had no central government able to do so for many years -- and the **United States of America (USA)**.

According to the CRC, every human being under the age of 18 is a child, unless majority is attained earlier under national law. This stipulation poses important challenges for the application of the CRC, especially in countries where the age of majority is linked to puberty, often different for



boys and girls. Under the CRC, all states are required to establish a minimum age of criminal responsibility, which according to the Beijing Rules, should "not be fixed at too low an age level bearing in mind the facts of emotional, mental and intellectual maturity". And even though a state may set the age of criminal responsibility below 18, the rights in the CRC still apply, especially those governing the child's treatment at the hands of law enforcement and judicial authorities. It is up to governments to ensure that all children enjoy their rights. No child should suffer discrimination. The rights of the CRC apply, "regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status". The essential message is equality of opportunity. Girls should be given the same opportunities as boys. Poor children, disabled children, refugee children, children of indigenous or minority groups should have the same rights as all others, the same opportunities to learn, to grow, to enjoy an adequate standard of living.

While the CRC emphasizes that the family is the natural environment for nurturing the child, it places the primary obligation on the state to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, even when these are not carried out directly by state agents. In this way, the CRC challenges the traditional perception that states are not responsible for abuses committed within the family or the community. Domestic violence, bonded child labour or child prostitution, for instance, are usually perpetrated by private individuals, but governments can be held accountable for failing in their responsibility to protect children from such abuses. Governments are obliged to report to the Committee within two years of the treaty coming into effect in their country, specifying the steps taken to bring national laws, policy and practice into line with the principles of the CRC. The Committee examines the facts and hears a wide range of evidence relevant to the government's report, often from non- governmental organizations (NGOs), and meets with each government to discuss its child rights record. The Committee advises governments on the implementation of the CRC, and engages them in substantive policy discussions on the resolution of specific children's rights issues. At the end of the process, the Committee adopts "concluding observations", which provide a series of recommendations on how states can improve the implementation of the provisions of the CRC. Governments must submit progress reports every five years.

All the procedures and justice systems should work in favor of children. Their overriding aim



must be to protect and promote children's fundamental rights and to give young offenders the greatest possible chance of reintegrating into society. Juvenile crime has specific causes. Tackling these causes through social policy before children come into contact with the law is clearly in the best interests of the child, and indeed of society as a whole. The principles of juvenile justice emphasize preventive measures, such as alleviating the social and economic exclusion of children, providing educational opportunities, and ending race and gender discrimination.

First steps are being made towards creating equitable systems of juvenile justice. Although practice often lags behind legislation, many countries are using the provisions of the CRC to help protect the rights of children in custody. Viet Nam, France and the Philippines are among the countries that have trained judges and law enforcement professionals on how to apply the CRC. El Salvador and Peru have enacted new justice codes for children, while Pakistan has modified criminal laws regarding minors. Brazil's progressive Statute of the Child and Adolescent of 1990 incorporates most of the CRC's principles. In Rwanda, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have used provisions of the CRC as the basis of their program to transfer some of the children accused of genocide and murder out of the desperately overcrowded adult prisons and into rehabilitation centers.

As far as the participation of children in armed conflicts with or without their will is concerned, war is an everyday reality for millions of children. Some have never known any other way of living, they have grown up in the midst of civil wars, guerrilla insurgency, or long-term occupation by a foreign army. For others, the world is suddenly turned upside down when invasion or ethnic cleansing forces them onto the road as refugees or displaced persons, often separated from their families. Untold thousands have been killed, disabled or orphaned. Many more have died or suffered from starvation or malnutrition, or lack of clean water, sanitation and medical care. Many are traumatized by witnessing brutal deaths and being surrounded by violence, fear and hardship. And hundreds of thousands of children around the world are obliged to participate in the killing.

Children are not always the accidental victims of the carnage. Some are killed deliberately by security forces and armed opposition groups, either in retribution or to provoke outrage in each other's communities. Some, mainly girls, are singled out for sexual abuse. Many are killed and



tortured because of where they live, or because of the religion, politics or ethnic origin of their family. Young people are sometimes picked up without charge, on the assumption that they participate in, or sympathize with, armed opposition groups. It is frightening enough for an adult to be held in secret detention, to be cut off from the outside world, from the support of family and the advice of a lawyer, at the mercy of the detaining authorities. It is even worse for vulnerable children.

In Manipur state in India, children, especially boys, are targeted by soldiers who believe that these boys might be supporters or future members of armed opposition groups. Under a Special Powers act, the security forces enjoy virtual immunity from prosecution, and have attempted to block judicial inquiries into many cases. Children are singled out for recruitment by both armed forces and armed opposition groups, and exploited as combatants. Many children have been forced to join by intimidation, including threats against their families, or abduction. Others volunteer, sometimes because they want to fight, sometimes because their families are destitute, and sometimes because they themselves are homeless and seeking food, shelter and security. Most get only minimal training and equipment before being thrown into the firing line of an adult war. Casualty rates among children are generally high, because of their inexperience, fearlessness and lack of training, and because they are often used for particularly hazardous assignments, such as intelligence work or planting landmines. In Colombia, child soldiers are sometimes called "little bees", because their size and agility enables them to move quickly and "sting" their enemies.

Each year, armed conflicts force many thousands of children to flee their homes in search of refuge. Sometimes they go with their families, sometimes alone; many get separated on the way. Eight years up to 2002 of brutal internal armed conflict in Sierra Leone had forced hundreds of thousands of civilians, many of them children, to seek refuge in neighboring countries, or in other parts of Sierra Leone. Children have not been spared the atrocities of the conflict: many have been killed, deliberately mutilated or maimed, others abducted and forced to fight with the rebel forces. Girls have been raped and forced into sexual slavery. Many of the refugees and displaced are unaccompanied children, separated from their parents after being abducted by rebel forces, or after their parents were killed or abducted in attacks on their towns or villages.



Many children flee because of abuses directed at them in their own right. Children may engage in political activities, such as joining demonstrations, distributing leaflets or attempting to organize such events in their schools and workplaces. This is often enough to get them detained and tortured. In many countries, just being a student is dangerous, as schools and colleges are suspected of being hotbeds of radical opposition to the government. Many of those who are trying to escape from either governmental or non-governmental forces cannot reach an international border and must seek refuge in another area of their country less immediately affected by the violence. Because they are not refugees, the internally displaced normally do not receive international assistance.

Children all over the world are hard at work -- in fields and sweatshop factories, in mines, brick kilns or brothels, and especially in private homes. They often work in dangerous and unhealthy environments and are deprived of the rights promised to them in the CRC such as health, education, recreation – even childhood itself. They grow up illiterate, unskilled and prone to crime. Many are sold or forced into labour by their parents or families. In other cases, the state itself forces children into dangerous or inappropriate work. Over the past years, the army in Myanmar has been forcibly relocating hundreds of thousands of civilians from Shan State. Some of them, including children, have been forced into heavy labour, including building roads, cutting and transporting teak logs, building military shelters, and even building a Buddhist temple. Shan refugees reported that children from 8 to 15 years of age were often used for this project, and that children also worked in place of their parents, who were busy earning money to support the family.

Child labourers are often employed in rural communities, many as bonded labourers. Some are sold to a rural landlord to work against a debt incurred by the family. Others are born into bondage, simply by being the children of bonded labourers who work in the family unit to pay off a family debt.

Most of the world's 250 million child workers do domestic labour. For many children, this is the only work they can find, while in some societies children from poor families are placed in another home by their parents in return for cash. Child domestics may be forced to work long hours for little or no salary, often endure permanent or long-term isolation from their families and friends, and rarely have the chance to attend school. An unknown number suffer rough treatment at the hands of



their employers, sometimes including severe beatings. Although child domestics can be as young as five years old, most are teenage girls, who are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse.

In Haiti, rural poverty forces many families to send their children, some as young as seven or eight, to work as unpaid domestics in the cities. The parents generally receive no cash payment, they simply hope that the child will be fed. Most of these "*restaveks*" (from the French *rester avec*, to stay with) work in poor households, only slightly above them on the economic ladder. According to a UNICEF study, most work for families with incomes of less than US\$250 a year. They work long hours at very heavy labour, cleaning, cooking and fetching water and food from long distances in scorching heat. They usually eat no more than the family's meager leftovers, and have no time to play or to make friends. Many are beaten and mistreated, and those who try to run away face severe punishment. Even though this abuse occurs in private households, the CRC, which Haiti has ratified, obliges the country to protect the child "from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment", including sexual abuse.

The issue is complicated, not all child workers are abused, and there is an ongoing debate about the degree to which children should be allowed to contribute to their families economically. Some argue that prohibiting child labour completely would increase the economic deprivation of extremely poor families who often depend on money brought in by children for their basic needs. Others say that removing children from some industries will only force them onto the streets or into more dangerous and exploitative forms of work.

There are no easy answers to this. Under the CRC the "best interests of the child" should be the primary consideration in all decisions affecting them. Child labour can often involve a violation of more than Article 32 of the CRC, which deals with protection from economic exploitation. Children who work are often denied their rights to education, health and physical integrity, and child labour often becomes a critical link in the cycle of deprivation and disadvantage that feeds other abuses. As a minimum, governments must ensure that child workers are protected: including by regulating children's working conditions, eliminating small children from the workplace and ensuring that those who abuse child labourers are brought to justice.

Female Genital Mutilation, the surgical removal of all or part of the genital organs, is



generally performed by a traditional practitioner with crude instruments and without anesthetic: it is painful, terrifying and traumatic. Most of the victims are young girls, usually between the ages of four and ten, although in some cultures FGM is carried out in infancy or on newly-married women. The long-term physical effects include permanent damage to the genital organs and mild to severe impairment of normal body functions, including sex and birth. The psychological trauma is impossible to quantify. FGM is practiced in some 29 countries in Africa and in minority communities in other parts of the world. It is estimated to have afflicted well over 100 million women and girls. In some countries, FGM is prevalent in all sectors of society. In Sierra Leone the practice is carried out by all ethnic groups, apart from the Creoles, and all classes, including the educated elite. FGM is similarly widespread in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mali and Somalia. In Côte d'Ivoire FGM affects about half of all women and in some communities is performed on baby girls less than

40 days old. Some two million African girls are believed to undergo FGM each year. There is a complex web of interrelated cultural factors behind FGM. It is seen by its practitioners as a necessary rite for initiation into womanhood and integration into the culture, without which a woman cannot marry. But it is increasingly opposed by women and men in Africa and elsewhere as a systematic form of violence against women and girls and a denial of their fundamental rights

Some governments have committed themselves to eradicate the practice. In Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, a bill banning FGM has been presented. In Ethiopia, the government banned FGM in its 1994 Constitution, which prohibits laws, customs and practices that oppress women or cause them mental or physical harm. In December 1997 the Supreme Council in Egypt upheld a Health Ministry decree banning female circumcision from being carried out in state hospitals. By rejecting arguments that FGM is a religious requirement and that medicalization makes the practice acceptable, the court's decision gave a major boost to eradication efforts worldwide. Some 90% of Egyptian girls have reportedly undergone FGM, usually between the ages of three and six. States are obliged to respect and to ensure the protection and promotion of all human rights, including the right to non-discrimination, the right to physical and mental security and the right to health.



Final remarks

The participants of the third Committee are called to have a fruitful discussion over the protection of the rights of the child, and how these can be promoted and protected. Bear in mind that all the participants should not express their own point of view but their opinion should be guided under the policy of the member – state they represent. It is expected that the delegates should not only express general wishes and expressions of hope about a better future for the children but also to be realistic and propose feasible solutions. That's all for now, good luck and see you all in Thessalonica.

Some useful links

CHILD ADVOCACY AND LEGAL ABUSE TOPICS

[Human Rights Watch - Children's Rights Division](http://www.hrw.org/children/about.htm) <http://www.hrw.org/children/about.htm>

[Witch Hunt](http://witchhunt.org/)

<http://witchhunt.org/>

[Truth in Justice](http://www.truthinjustice.org/)

<http://www.truthinjustice.org/>

[The Innocence Project](http://www.innocenceproject.org/)

<http://www.innocenceproject.org/>

[Child Abuse Project](http://fostersurvivor.netfirms.com//mainpage.shtml)

<http://fostersurvivor.netfirms.com//mainpage.shtml>

[Family Injustice](http://www.familyinjustice.com/)

<http://www.familyinjustice.com/>

[Family Courts](http://www.familycourts.com/)

<http://www.familycourts.com/>



[Children's Justice](#)

<http://childrens-justice.org/index.htm>

[Fight CPS and Win](#)

<http://www.fightcps.com/>

[Oregon Family Rights](#)

<http://oregonfamilyrights.com/>

[Child Protection Reform](#)

<http://www.childprotectionreform.org/>

[National Outrage](#)

<http://www.nationaloutrage.org/>

[Don't Take Our Kids](#)

<http://www.donttakeourkids.com/>

CHILD ABUSE ORGANIZATIONS ON THE INTERNET

[American Bar Association Guidelines for Representing Children](#)

<http://www.abanet.org/child/childrep.html>

[Ontario Conference on Religious Tolerance \(Not So Spiritual Topics\)](#)

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/negative.htm>

[Childhelp USA](#)

<http://www.childhelp.org/>

[Ontario Conference on Religious Tolerance \(Not So Spiritual Topics\)](#)

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/negative.htm>

[The C. Henry Kempe National Child Abuse Center](#)

<http://kempecenter.org/>

SURVIVORS AND RECOVERY ORGANIZATIONS

UN General Assembly: 3rd Committee – Topic Area A



[Survivors of Foster Care](#)

<http://www.sos-fosternet.org/index.html>

[SELF INJURY - YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY ONE!](#)

<http://www.palace.net/~llama/psych/injury.html#self>

[Soul's Self Help Central](#)

<http://www.soulselfhelp.on.ca/>

[Stop It Now](#)

<http://www.stopitnow.com/>

[Stop Child Abuse Now! The Story of Paul McGlaughlin](#)

<http://www.efn.org/~scan/>

[Borderline Personality Disorder](#)

<http://members.aol.com/BPDCentral/index.html>

[Recovery Anonymous](#)

<http://www.r-a.org/>

RESOURCES FOR ACCUSED

[False Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse](http://members.aol.com/falseabuse/index.htm/index.htm) <http://members.aol.com/falseabuse/index.htm/index.htm>

[ACCUSED \(This Page is Highly Recommended\)](#)

<http://members.aol.com/falseabuse/index.htm/index.htm>

CHILDREN

[Cornell University Children's Rights Law Materials](#)

http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/index.php/Children%2527s_Rights

[Voices for Children](#)

<http://www.voicesforchildren.ca/>



<http://www.truthinjustice.org/child-abuse.htm>

<http://www.truthinjustice.org/child-abuse.htm>

[Safe Child Home Page](#)

<http://www.safechild.org/>

[Expect the Best From a Girl](#)

<http://www.academic.org/>

[Children's Rights Council](#)

<http://www.gocrc.com/>

[The Baby Center](#)

<http://www.babycenter.com/>

LEGAL & LEGISLATION

[Children's Rights Law Materials \(Children and the Law\)](#)

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/>

[American Bar Association \(Children and the Law\)](#)

<http://www.abanet.org/child/>

[US Department of Human Resources Children's Bureau](#) <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/>

[Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

<http://www.unhchr.org.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>