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Security Council Background Guide 2024

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NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2024 National Model United Nations Conference in Washington, DC (NMUN•DC)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Security Council. This year's staff is: Director Vikram Sakkia and Assistant Director Evan Sun. Vikram has a master's degree in Computer Engineering from New York University and is currently a Cellular Technologies Software Engineer working at Qualcomm testing cellular communication components. Evan holds a Master of Science in electrical engineering from Johns Hopkins University and currently works at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab.

The topics under discussion for the Security Council are:

1. The Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
2. The Role of Children in Armed Conflict

Formed in 1946 at Church House in London, the Security Council is the United Nations' main crisis-management organ. The Security Council is comprised of five permanent members and ten elected members who regularly convene to maintain international peace and security. The body is empowered to promote negotiations, impose sanctions, and authorize the use of force, including the deployment of peacekeeping missions. As of early 2024, the Security Council supervises twelve peacekeeping missions across three continents, involving ninety thousand peacekeepers. Resolutions adopted by the Security Council are the only ones that are legally-binding on Member States.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to conduct additional research, explore your Member State's policies in-depth, and examine the policies of other Member States to improve your ability to negotiate and reach consensus. In preparation for the conference, each delegation will use their research to draft and submit a [position paper](#). Guidelines are available in the [NMUN Position Paper Guide](#).

The [NMUN website](#) has many additional resources, including two that are essential both in preparation for the conference and as a resource during the conference. They are:

1. The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not discuss the topics or agenda with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which include the long and short form of the rules as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretary-General Alliyah Edwards at usgalliyah.dc@nmun.org or Secretary-General Chris Duggan at secgen.dc@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,
Vikram Sakkia, Director
Evan Sun, Assistant Director



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Committee Overview

Introduction

The Security Council is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations defined by the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945).¹ The Security Council seeks to maintain international peace and security and oversees changes to the Charter.² As the Security Council is the only United Nations body that can create legally binding decisions for all Member States under Chapter VII of the Charter, it has a unique and impactful mandate to set norms and govern state actions.³ Traditionally, the Security Council discusses issues related to conflict, peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions, the protection of human rights, disarmament, and humanitarian crises.⁴ With the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) by the General Assembly in 2015, the Security Council has begun to increasingly focus on the intersection between sustainability, peace, and security.⁵

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The mandate of the Security Council is to maintain international peace and security and to take action whenever peace and security are threatened.⁶ The council's authority is particularly relevant concerning the UN's four primary purposes, as specified in the *Charter of the United Nations*: maintaining international peace and security; developing friendly relations among nations; cooperating in solving international problems; and promoting respect for human rights.⁷ The capabilities of the Security Council are highlighted in Chapters V-VIII of the Charter.⁸ Chapter V establishes the structure, membership, functions, and powers of the Security Council.⁹ Chapters VI and VII specifically address the range of actions that the Security Council can take when settling disputes.¹⁰ Chapter VI aims to settle disputes through peaceful means, such as negotiation and judicial settlement.¹¹ Chapter VII explores further actions that can be taken regarding threats to peace, breaches of peace, and acts of aggression.¹² This chapter also authorizes the Security Council to implement provisional measures aimed at de-escalating conflict situations, including the deployment of peacekeeping forces and sanctions.¹³ Chapter VIII allows the Security Council to call upon other regional agencies or arrangements to enforce appropriate operations and intervene if necessary.¹⁴

While the following list is not exhaustive, the mandate of the Security Council can be summarized as:

- The Security Council **will generally**: make policy recommendations that contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security; call on Member States to apply economic sanctions and measures not involving the use of force; call for arms embargos, enforce disarmament, and call upon international judicial mechanisms to become active; use diplomatic tools to investigate situations that might lead to

¹ United Nations, Security Council. *What is the Security Council?* N.d.

² Ibid.

³ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. ch. VII.

⁴ Council on Foreign Relations. *The UN Security Council*. 2021; Encyclopedia Britannica. *United Nations Security Council*. 2023.

⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

⁶ United Nations, Security Council. *What is the Security Council?* N.d.

⁷ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. art. 1.

⁸ Ibid. ch. V-VIII.

⁹ Ibid. ch. V.

¹⁰ Ibid. ch. VI-VII.

¹¹ Ibid. ch. VI.

¹² Ibid. ch. VII.

¹³ Ibid. ch. VII.

¹⁴ Ibid. ch. VIII.



aggression (between states, non-state groups, and within state territories); authorize military action against states or entities threatening international peace and security.¹⁵

- The Security Council **will not generally**: intervene in situations and enact enforcement measures unless a threat to international peace and security can be determined; encourage the use of force unless it considers that already taken non-military measures have proven inadequate.¹⁶

Governance, Structure, and Membership

The Security Council is the only United Nations body that has the power to adopt legally binding resolutions, as article 25 of the Charter obligates Member States to accept and carry out the council's decisions.¹⁷ The Security Council also has a variety of other tools to address issues on its agenda.¹⁸ For example, the President of the Security Council may issue press statements or presidential statements to communicate the council's position.¹⁹ Although not legally binding, such statements are used to bring attention to important issues and to recommend solutions to ongoing conflicts.²⁰

The Security Council was initially composed of five permanent members and six non-permanent members.²¹ In 1965, the number of non-permanent members was increased to 10.²² As the body's structure has remained largely unchanged, debates over the Security Council's efficacy and authority as a mediator on issues of international security continue.²³ The five permanent members are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, often colloquially referred to as the "P5."²⁴ Every year, the General Assembly elects five of the 10 non-permanent members who serve a two-year term.²⁵

Every Member State of the Security Council has one vote.²⁶ Votes on substantive content, like draft resolutions, require affirmative votes of nine Member States rather than a simple majority.²⁷ However, if one of the five permanent members of the Security Council casts a negative vote on a matter of substance, such as a draft resolution, it does not pass.²⁸ This is known as a "veto."²⁹ In the 1950s, Security Council Member States made frequent use of their capacity to veto, but its usage declined in the 1960s, rising again in the 1970s and 1980s.³⁰ In the last decades, the use of the veto power has been

¹⁵ United Nations, Security Council. *Functions and Powers*. N.d.

¹⁶ United Nations, Security Council. *Actions with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression*. N.d.

¹⁷ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. art. 25; United Nations, Security Council. *What is the Security Council?* N.d.

¹⁸ Security Council Report. *The UN Security Council Handbook: A User's Guide to Practice and Procedure*. 2019. pp. 36-38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ United Nations, Security Council. *Voting System*. N.d.

²² Global Policy Forum. *Background on Security Council Reform*. 2021.

²³ Council on Foreign Relations. *The UN Security Council*. 2021.

²⁴ United Nations, Security Council. *Current Members*. N.d.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. art. 27.

²⁷ United Nations, Security Council. *Voting System*. N.d.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Security Council Report. *In Hindsight: The Veto*. 2013; Security Council Report. *The Permanent Members and the Use of the Veto: An Abridged History*. 2013.



comparatively rare.³¹ In recent years, the council has adopted many resolutions by consensus and is divided in relatively few circumstances.³²

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.



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1. The Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Introduction

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), decades of regional violence between armed militias, political instability, and widespread human rights violations have led to a complex humanitarian crisis.³³ The Congo region was the center of the First and Second Congo War in the 1990s, which led to an estimated 5.4 million excess deaths between August 1998 and April 2007.³⁴ Despite peace agreements that formally ended the war in 2002, regional armed militias remain in ongoing conflict with the Congolese government, which has led to the internal displacement of more than six million people.³⁵ In recent months, escalating violence in eastern DRC has led to an exponential rise in civilian protection violations and restricted access to humanitarian aid and basic services.³⁶

In March 2022, the March 23 Movement (M23) rebel military group reemerged from dormancy following the ceasefire agreement in 2013 and launched an attack on positions held by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) in eastern DRC.³⁷ Since the initial offensive in March 2022, M23 has expanded its control over large parts of the North Kivu province in eastern DRC and made advances towards Goma, the capital of the North Kivu province.³⁸ Attempts at peace agreements between M23 and the DRC broke down in October 2023, and by the end of 2023, M23 was the most active non-state armed group in the DRC.³⁹ The United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo has found significant evidence that Rwanda has provided direct support to M23 in the form of artillery, weapons, ammunition, and soldiers.⁴⁰ Xia Huang, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, warned of escalating conflict between the DRC and Rwanda over accusations regarding the activities of M23, stating “the military strengthening in both countries, the absence of direct high-level dialogue and the persistence of hate speech are all worrying signs that we cannot ignore.”⁴¹

The continuous conflict has led to numerous violations of humanitarian law, severe restrictions on routes for civilian humanitarian aid, and the displacement of more than half a million people.⁴² Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are individuals forced to leave their homes but have not crossed international borders and face an increased risk of gender-based violence, child protection violations, and food insecurity while also lacking access to sustainable employment and livelihood opportunities.⁴³ The Human Rights Watch has reported a growing trail of war crimes committed by the M23 rebel group since the

³³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Democratic Republic of the Congo situation*. 2023.

³⁴ International Rescue Committee. *Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2007. p. ii.

³⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Democratic Republic of the Congo situation*. 2023.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Center for Preventive Action. *Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2024.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. *Rwanda-backed M23 Rebels Advance Toward Goma in Eastern DR Congo*. 2024.

⁴⁰ United Nations, Security Council. *Letter dated 13 June 2023 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*. 2023. pp. 11-13.

⁴¹ United Nations. *Armed Groups, Hate Speech, Lack of Dialogue in Great Lakes Region Cannot Go Ignored, Special Envoy Tells Security Council*. 2023.

⁴² United Nations Children's Fund. *UNHCR and UNICEF express grave concern over the humanitarian toll on civilians in eastern DR Congo*. 2023.

⁴³ United Nations, Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. *About internally displaced persons*. N.d.; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Democratic Republic of the Congo Regional Refugee Plan*. 2023. pp. 7-9.



resurgence in violence including forcible recruitment and execution of civilians.⁴⁴ Indiscriminate bombing has resulted in at least 55 reported civilian deaths due to explosives, shelling, and aerial bombardments in the North Kivu province since October 2023.⁴⁵ While various UN agencies and non-governmental organizations are working to provide aid to civilians in distress, they are limited in their capacity to provide critical humanitarian aid as a result of vast underfunding.⁴⁶ As of March 2024, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had only received 13% of the funding required to meet humanitarian needs in the DRC.⁴⁷

International and Regional Framework

In 1999, Angola, DRC, Namibia, Uganda, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe signed the *Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement* to attempt to bring an end to the Second Congo War.⁴⁸ Signatories agreed to halt military operations, prohibit any further military movement, and release all prisoners of war.⁴⁹ Furthermore, signatories requested that the United Nations deploy a peacekeeping force to ensure the implementation of the ceasefire agreement under Chapter VII of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945).⁵⁰ The Security Council proceeded to establish the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) to observe the ceasefire, disengage forces, maintain a liaison with all parties to the ceasefire, and facilitate future United Nations deployments if necessary.⁵¹

Despite the 1999 ceasefire agreement, numerous offensives continued to arise over the next couple of years, and all sides were accused of breaking the ceasefire.⁵² As a result, in February 2000, the Security Council expanded the original mandate of MONUC and authorized up to 5,537 military personnel to assist with a new mandate to directly facilitate and coordinate the ceasefire.⁵³ The Security Council also called for the creation of an International Conference on peace, security, democracy, and development in the Great Lakes region.⁵⁴ This led to the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), formally established in 2004 with the *Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy, and Development in the Great Lakes Region*.⁵⁵

In December 2002, Congolese parties of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue signed the *Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition* that described the transitional arrangements for power-sharing among

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch. *DR Congo: Atrocities by Rwanda-Backed M23 Rebels*. 2023.

⁴⁵ Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. *Rwanda-backed M23 Rebels Advance Toward Goma in Eastern DR Congo*. 2024.

⁴⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Democratic Republic of the Congo situation*. 2023.

⁴⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *DRC Situation Funding Update - 2024*. 2024.

⁴⁸ United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Ceasefire Agreement (Lusaka Agreement)*. 1999.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ United Nations, Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. art. 7.

⁵¹ United Nations, MONUC. *MONUC Mandate*. N.d.; United Nations, Security Council. *Security Council resolution 1279 (1999) [on establishment of the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)] (S/RES/1279)*. 1999.

⁵² Human Rights Watch. *Between War and Peace - Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses Since the Lusaka Protocol*. 1996.

⁵³ United Nations, Security Council. *Security Council resolution 1291 (2000) [on extension of the mandate and expansion of the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)] (S/RES/1291)*. 2000.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region*. 2004.



Congolese parties until elections could be held.⁵⁶ In April 2002, the *Sun City Agreement* was formalized and signed by parties of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, committing parties to the arrangements outlined in the *Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition* and officially marking the end of the Second Congo War.⁵⁷

In 2006, members of the ICGLR signed the *Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region*.⁵⁸ This pact defines the agenda of the ICGLR to create security, stability, and development in the region and includes protocols on non-aggression, prevention of crimes against humanity, protection of internally displaced persons, and judicial cooperation.⁵⁹ In 2013, members of the ICGLR signed the *Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework* agreement to address the violence that continued to occur in eastern DRC.⁶⁰ The framework outlines renewed commitments at the state, regional, and international levels to strengthen state sovereignty and security as well as support the long-term stability of the region.⁶¹ In the most recent progress report on the *Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region*, the Secretary-General expressed deep concern at the escalating tensions between the DRC and Rwanda caused by negative rhetoric and accusations on both sides on the use of armed rebel groups as proxies.⁶² He called upon the two countries to maintain open channels of communication and invest in the existing peace processes to avoid military escalation and achieve lasting peace in the region.⁶³

Role of the International System

The United Nations has maintained an active peacekeeping force, MONUC, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the *Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement* in 1999.⁶⁴ In 2004, the Security Council expanded the mandate of MONUC to include deploying and maintaining a presence in the Democratic Republic of Congo to discourage violence in key areas of volatility and facilitate a secure environment for free, transparent, and peaceful political processes to occur.⁶⁵ In 2010, the Security Council renamed MONUC to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to reflect the progress made by the Democratic Republic of Congo in overcoming the challenges of the past 15 years and emphasize the continued need to address challenges to the stability of the region.⁶⁶

In 2012, the rebel military group M23 emerged and became a major crisis in the North Kivu region.⁶⁷ In 2013, governments in Africa's Great Lakes region signed the *Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region*, requesting additional support from

⁵⁶ United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Pretoria Agreement)*. 2002.

⁵⁷ United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Inter-Congolese Negotiations: The Final Act (Sun City Agreement)*. 2003.

⁵⁸ United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region*. 2006.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region*. 2013.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² United Nations, Security Council. *Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region*. 2024.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ United Nations, MONUC. *MONUC Mandate*. N.d.

⁶⁵ United Nations, Security Council. *Resolution 1565 (S/RES/1565)*. 2004.

⁶⁶ United Nations, Security Council. *Security Council resolution 1925 (2010) [on extension of the mandate of the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)] (S/RES/1925)*. 2010.

⁶⁷ Center for Preventive Action. *Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2024.



the United Nations in the form of an offensive military force to combat rebel movements in eastern DRC.⁶⁸ The Security Council then established the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) as part of MONUSCO.⁶⁹ FIB was the first United Nations peacekeeping organization specifically mandated to carry out targeted, offensive operations to neutralize and disarm groups considered a threat to state authority and civilian security.⁷⁰ This was a significant departure from the traditional peacekeeping mission that MONUSCO had operated under, in which MONUSCO was only permitted to use force in the case of self-defense rather than direct action against rebel groups.⁷¹

MONUSCO's mandate continued to be renewed yearly with an emphasis on addressing threats by armed groups towards civilians while maintaining a clear exit strategy for the peacekeeping force.⁷² However, in 2023, DRC President Felix Tshisekedi, requested the accelerated withdrawal of MONUSCO forces to begin by the beginning of 2024, citing that the MONUSCO task force has been ineffective in addressing rebellions and armed conflicts in the DRC over the past 25 years.⁷³ In December 2023, the Security Council renewed the mandate of MONUSCO for one additional year and laid out a three-phase plan to complete the full withdrawal of all MONUSCO forces by the end of 2024.⁷⁴ On 1 May 2024, the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General announced that MONUSCO had ended operations in the South Kivu province and limited implementation of its mandate to the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri.⁷⁵

Most recently as a result of the escalating violence in eastern DRC, the East African Community-led Nairobi Process and Angola-mediated Luanda Process have been dual efforts in the Great Lakes region to promote regional peace.⁷⁶ The Nairobi Process is focused on regional leadership within the East African Community to broker a peace agreement between the Congolese government and armed groups operating in eastern DRC while the Luanda process is focused on ending hostility between the Congolese and Rwandan governments.⁷⁷

In November 2022, the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) was deployed to conduct joint operations with the FARDC and attempt to combat the M23 rebels.⁷⁸ However, as of December 2023, the EACRF ceased operations at the expiry of its mandate, which the Congolese government chose not to renew due to its disappointment with the force's effectiveness in neutralizing M23.⁷⁹ The Congolese government transitioned to working with the Southern African Development Community to deploy the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC) in eastern DRC to take over security responsibilities originally held by the EACRF.⁸⁰ In its communique on 4 March 2024, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) endorsed the December 2023 deployment of the SAMIDRC and called for the immediate cessation of hostilities in the eastern DRC

⁶⁸ United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region*. 2013.

⁶⁹ United Nations, Security Council. *Security Council resolution 2098 (2013) [on extension of the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) until 31 Mar. 2014] (S/RES/2098)*. 2013.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Al-Jazeera. *DR Congo President Tshisekedi seeks withdrawal of UN peacekeepers this year*. 2023.

⁷⁴ United Nations, Security Council. *Security Council resolution 2717 (2023) [on extension of the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) until 20 Dec. 2024] (S/RES/2717)*. 2023.

⁷⁵ United Nations, Security Council. *Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General*. 2024.

⁷⁶ The East African. *Kenya: DRC talks to continue under Nairobi, Luanda processes*. 2023.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Security Council Report. *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Closed Consultations*. 2024.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.



region.⁸¹ The AU PSC requested the AU Commission provide requisite support for SAMIDRC and the United Nations Security Council further provide material and financial resources to enable SAMIDRC to effectively discharge its mandate.⁸² The Security Council has received the request but has not made any decisions as to authorizing MONUSCO to provide logistical and operational support to SAMIDRC.⁸³

M23 Resurgence in Eastern DRC

As part of the transitional government established at the end of the Second Congo War, belligerent parties in the DRC were directed to consolidate their forces into one national army.⁸⁴ However, a sect of the rebel movement, Congolese Rally for Democracy refused to join the transitional government and defected to form the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) in 2006.⁸⁵ The CNDP clashed with the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) in the North and South Kivu provinces of the DRC until 23 March 2009, when a peace accord was signed, in which the CNDP agreed to become an official national party in exchange for releasing imprisoned members.⁸⁶ In 2012, a sect of former CNDP soldiers, self-proclaimed the M23 Movement, mutinied against the government citing poor conditions in the army and the DRC government's reluctance to implement the conditions outlined in the 2009 peace accord.⁸⁷ By 20 November 2012, the M23 rebels had forced FRDC forces to retreat from Goma, the capital of the North Kivu province, and temporarily taken over the city.⁸⁸

In response, FIB was requested by governments in the Great Lakes Region and authorized by the Security Council in 2013 as an offensive operation to enforce peace in the DRC.⁸⁹ The formation of the brigade was enabled by the strong political commitment of the 11 African nations in the Great Lakes region as well as collaboration between the five Special Envoys to ensure that the FIB aligned with the political strategy and frameworks of the DRC.⁹⁰ Close collaboration between the FIB and the FARDC and logistical support from MONUSCO enabled intensive operations against the M23 rebel group.⁹¹ By December 2013, a peace agreement was reached between the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and M23.⁹²

In a 2012 letter to the President of the Security Council, the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo provided evidence that the Rwandan government was violating arms embargo and sanctions regime violations and providing financial and material support to the M23 rebellion group.⁹³ The Group of Experts found evidence that Rwanda allowed the transportation of M23 weapons and soldiers through

⁸¹ African Union. *Communique of the 1203rd meeting of the PSC held on 4 March 2024, on Consideration of the Situation in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Deployment of the Southern African Development Community Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC)*. 2024.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Security Council Report. *In Hindsight: The Escalating Conflict in Eastern DRC and UN Support of Regional Forces*. 2024.

⁸⁴ Al-Jazeera. *A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo*. 2024.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Center for Preventive Action. *Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2024.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations. *Force Intervention Brigade: A Sea Change for UN Peace Operations*. 2014. pp. 2-3.

⁹⁰ Ibid. pp. 2-3.

⁹¹ Ibid. pp. 2-3.

⁹² United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Outcome Documents from the Conclusion of the Kampala Dialogue between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the M23*. 2013.

⁹³ United Nations, Security Council. *Letter dated 26 June 2012 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*. 2012.



Rwandan territory and supplied the rebel group with weapons and ammunition.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) provided support such as troops, recruits, and weapons through supply routes across the Rwanda-DRC border as well as directly intervened within Congolese territory to reinforce M23.⁹⁵

M23 remained dormant until November 2021, when it launched a series of attacks against the FARDC near the area where the borders between the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda meet.⁹⁶ While the Government of Rwanda has denied involvement in the current M23 offensive, the United Nations Group of Experts has officially documented photographic and eyewitness evidence that shows direct intervention and troop reinforcements by the RDF.⁹⁷

The deterioration in security in the eastern DRC region has led to an increase in IDPs as well as asylum-seeking refugees fleeing from the armed conflict between M23 and FARDC forces.⁹⁸ The redeployment of FARDC against M23 has resulted in a security vacuum in other parts of the North and South Kivu regions where rebel armed groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda are escalating violence against civilians.⁹⁹ Nearly 5.6 million people are currently internally displaced in the Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu provinces alone and at least 150 civilians have been killed since conflict with M23 resumed in November 2023 following the failed truce.¹⁰⁰

M23's resurgence coincides with Uganda's increasing influence in eastern DRC.¹⁰¹ In December 2021, DRC President Felix Tshisekedi and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni agreed to a joint operation in the northeastern Congo to dismantle the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an Islamic rebel group that operates in Uganda and the DRC's North Kivu region.¹⁰² Simultaneously, a series of meetings between Tshisekedi and Museveni have led to a mutual agreement over the construction of roads in eastern DRC linking the two Member States.¹⁰³ The Congolese government has also allowed Burundian troops to carry out targeted operations against the Burundian RED-Tabara rebels starting in 2021.¹⁰⁴ In contrast with collaboration with Ugandan and Burundian forces, the DRC has not put similar agreements in place with Rwanda.¹⁰⁵ President Paul Kagame of Rwanda has repeated his concern and disappointment in not being included in the military operation against the ADF.¹⁰⁶

The Humanitarian Crisis in the eastern DRC

The conflict between M23 and the FARDC led to a record number of civilians leaving their areas of origin in North Kivu and seeking humanitarian assistance.¹⁰⁷ The rising number of IDPs has created a shortage of shelters in the Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu regions where overpacked displacement camps are

⁹⁴ Ibid. 2012.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 2012.

⁹⁶ United Nations, Security Council. *Letter dated 10 June 2022 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*. 2022.

⁹⁷ United Nations, Security Council. *Letter dated 13 June 2023 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*. 2023. pp. 11-13.

⁹⁸ United Nations, Security Council. *Escalating Violence in Democratic Republic of Congo Exacerbating Humanitarian Crisis, Special Representative Warns Security Council, Urging Durable Political Solution*. 2024.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Congo Research Group and Ebuteli. *Uganda's Operation Shujaa in the DRC*. 2022. pp. 7-8.

¹⁰² Ibid. pp. 7-8.

¹⁰³ Ibid. pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR urges protection of civilians and aid access amid surging violence in eastern DR Congo*. 2024.



prone to the rapid spread of diseases like measles and cholera due to the significant strain on sanitary conditions and a lack of adequate supplies.¹⁰⁸ At least 104 displacement sites hosting 630,000 IDPs were recorded around Goma as a result of the conflict.¹⁰⁹ The lack of services and assistance is exacerbated by closures of major roads that serve as logistical supply routes in the eastern DRC for getting necessities such as food and medical supplies to vulnerable people.¹¹⁰ For instance, the road connecting the town of Goma to Bukavu was cut off after M23 took control of the town of Shasha on 3 February 2024, the fourth such route cut off by the M23 group.¹¹¹ As a result of the lack of basic services, humanitarian assistance, and shelter space available at IDP sites, many displaced civilians are forced to return to their homes in North Kivu despite the violence in the region.¹¹²

The use of wide-impact explosive weapons in densely populated urban areas of the eastern DRC region is also causing extensive civilian casualties.¹¹³ North Kivu hospitals supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) saw over 1,000 people with weapon wounds in 2023, an increase of 60% compared to the previous year's total.¹¹⁴ UNHCR was deeply alarmed by reports of bombs falling in civilian locations including shelters in Sake and Goma where thousands of IDPs reside.¹¹⁵ On 3 May 2024, the head of MONUSCO, Ms. Bintou Keita, condemned the direct bombing of IDP sites in Lac-Vert and Mugunga near Goma and North Kivu that led to the deaths of 18 civilians and dozens of injuries.¹¹⁶

Gender-based violence is a recurring issue in areas associated with armed group violence and lack of humanitarian aid access.¹¹⁷ On 30 April 2024, various United Nations agencies and partners issued a joint statement expressing alarm at the rapidly rising humanitarian needs in the eastern DRC and the heightened impact on women and girls in affected regions.¹¹⁸ Women and girls in displacement camps have reported being at risk of sexual assault and harassment while traveling outside of camps in search of supplies for basic needs as well as domestic work.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, many survivors are hesitant to seek assistance due to the stigma associated with gender-based violence, and armed groups often present a barrier to seeking support services.¹²⁰ Reported cases of gender-based violence in North Kivu increased by 37% in the first three months of 2023 compared to 2022.¹²¹

¹⁰⁸ World Food Programme. *Humanitarian Emergency in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu Report*. 2024. pp. 1-3.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2024.

¹¹⁰ United Nations, Population Fund. *UNFPA Democratic Republic of the Congo Situation Report - Humanitarian Response Scale up: Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces (01-31 August 2023)*. 2023.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² United States Agency for International Development. *Democratic Republic of the Congo – Complex Emergency*. 2023.

¹¹³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR urges protection of civilians and aid access amid surging violence in eastern DR Congo*. 2024.

¹¹⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Democratic Republic of the Congo: The forgotten people of North Kivu*. 2024. p. 4.

¹¹⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR urges protection of civilians and aid access amid surging violence in eastern DR Congo*. 2024.

¹¹⁶ United Nations, MONUSCO. *MONUSCO strongly condemns the deadly bombing of IDP sites in Goma*. 2024.

¹¹⁷ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Democratic Republic of the Congo: The forgotten people of North Kivu*. 2024. p. 5.

¹¹⁸ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *DRC: UN and partners warn escalating conflict is fuelling unprecedented civilian suffering*. 2024.

¹¹⁹ United Nations, Population Fund. *UNFPA Democratic Republic of the Congo Situation Report - Humanitarian Response Scale up: Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces (01-31 August 2023)*. 2023. p. 2.

¹²⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Democratic Republic of the Congo: The forgotten people of North Kivu*. 2024. p. 5.

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 5.



UNHCR has led efforts to enact Emergency Shelter Clusters alongside Quick Impact Projects to enable communities to self-sufficiently respond to their own protection needs.¹²² Quick Impact Projects are small-scale low-cost projects typically led by local actors that address urgent protection needs for the community ranging from refurbishing schools to providing women access to safe water points.¹²³ In 2023, the UNHCR implemented 28 Quick Impact Projects such as small-scale bakeries near Goma, and strengthened 98 community structures.¹²⁴ Other organizations such as the International Rescue Committee are working to provide emergency services to individuals affected by the continuing violence including a range of essential health services targeting primary health care, sexual and reproductive health, hygiene, and disease control.¹²⁵ The ICRC has provided daily drinking water to thousands of displaced people at the Lushagala displacement site in North Kivu, telephone booths in various displacement camps for enabling separated family members to connect, and surgical procedures for wounded civilians.¹²⁶ In 2023, Doctors Without Borders provided care for more than 25,000 survivors of gender-based violence and at one point, were treating 70 cases a day of gender-based violence in Goma alone.¹²⁷ However, a lack of funding is prohibiting adequate resources to meet the rising needs and support.¹²⁸ For instance, the UNHCR is unable to reimburse landowners for access to land for new shelters and displacement camps.¹²⁹ As of April 2024, only 16% of the \$2.6 billion needed to fund the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan has been received.¹³⁰

Conclusion

The regional violence in the eastern DRC between the M23 rebel group and the Congolese forces is a threat to the peace and stability of the Great Lakes Region and risks escalating into a larger regional conflict.¹³¹ The current situation is rooted in decades of regional political turmoil and violence with various groups and movements playing a role in the present-day crisis.¹³² The violence has also led to the forcible displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and risks exacerbating the humanitarian crisis that the DRC already faces.¹³³ Millions of IDPs lack access to basic needs as a result of a lack of funding, shelter, supplies, and logistical supply routes.¹³⁴ At the same time, the United Nations peacekeeping force, MONUSCO, is withdrawing from the Democratic Republic of Congo at the request of the Congolese government.¹³⁵ Addressing the violence in the Great Lakes region while respecting the sovereignty of the

¹²² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2024.

¹²³ United Nations, Department of Peace Operations. *Quick Impact Projects for communities*. N.d.

¹²⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2024.

¹²⁵ International Rescue Committee. *Crisis in the DRC: What you need to know and how to help*. 2024.

¹²⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross. *DR Congo: More than 44,000 people receive emergency food aid as violence in eastern provinces intensifies*. 2024.

¹²⁷ Doctors Without Borders. *One of the world's biggest humanitarian crises is taking place in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2024.

¹²⁸ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *DRC: UN and partners warn escalating conflict is fuelling unprecedented civilian suffering*. 2024.

¹²⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. 2024.

¹³⁰ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *DRC: UN and partners warn escalating conflict is fuelling unprecedented civilian suffering*. 2024.

¹³¹ United Nations. *Armed Groups, Hate Speech, Lack of Dialogue in Great Lakes Region Cannot Go Ignored, Special Envoy Tells Security Council*. 2023.

¹³² Center for Preventive Action. *Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. 2024.

¹³³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Democratic Republic of the Congo situation*. 2023.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ United Nations, Security Council. *Security Council resolution 2717 (2023) [on extension of the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) until 20 Dec. 2024] (S/RES/2717)*. 2023.



Democratic Republic of Congo is needed to maintain international peace and security and ensure civilian safety and security.¹³⁶

Further Research

There are several key questions that delegates should consider when pursuing further research on this topic: Are there interregional issues contributing to violence in the eastern DRC that can be mediated by the Security Council? How can the Security Council and the United Nations contribute to peace and security in the eastern DRC while respecting the DRC's request to withdraw the MONUSCO peacekeeping force by the end of 2024? What can the Security Council do to secure civilian safety and ensure adequate humanitarian access in areas of conflict in the eastern DRC?

¹³⁶ United Nations. *Armed Groups, Hate Speech, Lack of Dialogue in Great Lakes Region Cannot Go Ignored, Special Envoy Tells Security Council*. 2023.



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2. The Role of Children in Armed Conflict

"Children do not start wars, and they cannot end them, but they always pay the highest price."¹³⁷

Introduction

Since the establishment of the United Nations, the issue of children in armed conflict has been of high priority on the international agenda.¹³⁸ In 2022, approximately 486 million children, equalling 18.8% of the global population of children, were living in a conflict zone, with around 96 million of them living in high-intensity conflict areas.¹³⁹ Additionally, based on the data garnered by the Peace Research Institute Oslo in 2022, Africa was the world region with the highest total number of children living in conflict zones, with 183 million children, while the Middle East had the highest share of children living in conflict zones relative to the total child population.¹⁴⁰ The result of having so many children present in zones of armed conflict has led to the killing and maiming of over 8000 children, a 5% increase as compared to 2021.¹⁴¹ Over 2000 children were detained for their actual or alleged association with parties that were involved in the conflict, making them even more vulnerable to ill-treatment and torture, including sexual violence.¹⁴² The United Nations Secretary-General revealed the grim reality for thousands of children who are recruited, used, killed, maimed, fell victim to sexual violence, or abducted in conflict zones, which demonstrates a continued disregard for international humanitarian law and international human rights.¹⁴³

As per the 1989 *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), a child is defined as any human being below the age of 18 years.¹⁴⁴ The United Nations Secretary-General identifies children in armed conflict as children affected by six grave violations of applicable international law involving: the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict; killing and maiming of children; sexual violence against children; attacks against schools and hospitals; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access to children.¹⁴⁵ Children can be considered child soldiers if they are individuals under the age of 18 who are recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups in any capacity, or may be determined as victims of recruitment if they are coerced or forced into joining armed forces or armed groups.¹⁴⁶ Child protection in armed conflict encompasses measures and initiatives aimed at safeguarding the rights, well-being, and dignity of children affected by armed conflict.¹⁴⁷ This includes preventing and responding to the six grave violations, such as the recruitment and use of child soldiers, killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access.¹⁴⁸

The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC) ascertained that although there has been deterioration in the situations faced by children in some contexts, such as Myanmar, South Sudan, or Burkina Faso, progress has been made in

¹³⁷ United Nations Children's Fund. *Statement by Catherine Russell, UNICEF Executive Director, following her two-day visit to the Middle-East*. 2024.

¹³⁸ Peace Research Institute Oslo. *Children Affected by Armed Conflict, 1990–2022*. 2023.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ United Nations, Security Council. *Secretary General's annual report on Children and Armed Conflict (A/77/895 S/2023/363)*. 2023.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. 1989; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *The Six Grave Violations*. N.d.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Child Recruitment and Use*. N.d.

¹⁴⁷ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Protecting Children During Armed Conflict*. 2009.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*



protecting them in Member States such as the Central African Republic, Colombia, Iraq, Nigeria, and Yemen.¹⁴⁹ These Member States have all demonstrated proactive efforts to safeguard children, including deliberating with parties to conflict.¹⁵⁰ In 2023, the SRSG-CAAC reported that children were still extensively exploited in conflict zones, forced into various roles including espionage, combat, and human shields, enduring horrific abuse with severe consequences for their mental and physical health, with boys primarily targeted, but girls also subjected to sexual violence upon recruitment.¹⁵¹

International and Regional Framework

The International frameworks on Children's rights in armed conflict began with the establishment of the CRC adopted in 1989 by the General Assembly.¹⁵² The CRC details measures that protect children from recruitment into armed forces or groups, ensuring their safety and well-being during armed conflicts, and assisting in their recovery and reintegration into society after conflict.¹⁵³ In 2000, the General Assembly adopted resolution 54/263 which eventually became the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict*.¹⁵⁴ The Protocol strengthened protections for children affected by armed conflict, raising the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces to 18, and measures for the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers as there had been no previous standards set.¹⁵⁵

Following the CRC and the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1612 on "Children and armed conflict" in 2005.¹⁵⁶ The resolution mandated the establishment of a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) to gather accurate, timely, and objective information on any instances of the six grave violations against children in armed conflict.¹⁵⁷ Another key aspect of this resolution was encouraging Member States to develop and implement action plans to end violations against children, including the release and reintegration of child soldiers.¹⁵⁸ The progress made towards achieving the goals of this resolution is tracked by the SRSG-CAAC, which publishes an annual report on the subject.¹⁵⁹

In 1990, the African Union (AU) established the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to address the regions with the highest number of children affected.¹⁶⁰ It represents a commitment by African states to promote and protect the rights of children, serving as a framework for addressing the specific challenges faced by children in Africa affected by armed conflict.¹⁶¹ Similarly, in 2015, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children to address the issue of violence against children in the region and to ensure

¹⁴⁹ United Nations, Security Council. *Secretary General's annual report on Children and Armed Conflict (A/77/895-S/2023/363)*. 2023.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid..

¹⁵¹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *To mark the International Day against the use of Child Soldiers, the Special Representative is launching the Children and Armed Conflict Primer*. 2024.

¹⁵² United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. 1989.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (A/RES/54/263)*. 2000.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ United Nations, Security Council. *Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) [on children in armed conflict] (S/RES/1612)*. 2005.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Annual Report*. N.d.

¹⁶⁰ African Union. *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*. 1990.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.



that children can grow up in safe and supportive environments.¹⁶² In 2019, there was a Mid-Term Review of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children (2016-2025), by ASEAN, which underscored the commitment of various ASEAN Member States and the progress made in its priority areas.¹⁶³ To accelerate further action and fulfill commitments by Member States, the Mid-Term Review highlighted key recommendations including enhancing data management, understanding violence drivers, strengthening multi-sectoral coordination, advancing law reforms, increasing investment in child protection, and improving response services and enforcement mechanisms.¹⁶⁴

Role of the International System

In 2005, the Security Council established the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, to review reports on violations against children by States parties of the CRC.¹⁶⁵ Comprising all 15 Security Council members, it operates by consensus and is currently monitoring reports, progress on action plans, and making recommendations to promote child protection in conflict areas, including suggesting peacekeeping mandates and coordinating with other United Nations bodies.¹⁶⁶ It adopts formal conclusions, issues recommendations, and receives updates from the field through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the SRSG-CAAC.¹⁶⁷

In December 1996, the mandate of SRSG-CAAC was created by the General Assembly, within resolution 51/77 on "The rights of the child," to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict, raise awareness, promote the collection of information about the plight of children affected by war, and foster international cooperation to improve their protection.¹⁶⁸ The SRSG-CAAC produces annual reports documenting the six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict worldwide.¹⁶⁹ These reports raise awareness, advocate for the protection of children's rights, and hold perpetrators accountable.¹⁷⁰ Member States use the information to allocate funding and resources to develop support programs with organizations such as the UNICEF to provide essential services, such as education, healthcare, and psychosocial support, for affected children and their families.¹⁷¹ Member States also use the information provided in the reports to formulate policies and strategies aimed at protecting children affected by armed conflict.¹⁷² By utilizing the information provided in these reports, the Security Council seeks to enhance the protection of children's rights, promote accountability for violations, and contribute to the resolution of conflicts in a manner that prioritizes the well-being of children.¹⁷³ In 2020, the SRSG-CAAC launched a global campaign to generate greater awareness and action to protect children affected by war, called ACT to Protect.¹⁷⁴ The campaign aims to bolster collaboration between the United

¹⁶² Association of Southeast Asian Nations. ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children. 2016.

¹⁶³ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *Ending violence against children in ASEAN Member States Mid-term review of priority areas under the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children 2016-2025*. 2019.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, Security Council. *Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) [on children in armed conflict] (S/RES/1612)*. 2005.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *About Us*. N.d; United Nations, General Assembly. *The rights of the child (A/RES/44/25)*. 1996.

¹⁶⁹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Annual Report*. N.d.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *ACT TO PROTECT children affected by conflict*. N.d.



Nations, civil society, and the international community to support actions aimed at ending and preventing grave violations against children in conflict situations.¹⁷⁵

Founded in 1991, the Committee on the Rights of the Child is a body of 18 independent experts responsible for monitoring the implementation of the CRC.¹⁷⁶ The Committee works to enable Member States to change laws and policies, to enable better healthcare and nutrition, better safeguards to protect children from violence and exploitation, and have more children's voices heard and participate in society.¹⁷⁷ The Committee on the Rights of the Child collaborates with Member States by reviewing their reports, issuing guidance through general comments, monitoring compliance, engaging in advocacy efforts, and providing capacity-building support to protect the rights of children affected by armed conflict.¹⁷⁸ Through these mechanisms, the Committee on the Rights of the Child works to ensure that Member States fulfill their obligations under the CRC, advocating for measures to prevent violations, provide essential services, and promote the well-being of children in conflict situations.¹⁷⁹

Another key organization on children's safety is UNICEF, established in 1946, to try and protect the future of children's lives in the aftermath of World War II.¹⁸⁰ UNICEF's role is multifaceted, encompassing protection, humanitarian assistance, reintegration, advocacy, and capacity building but has taken a specific focus on the Security Council-mandated MRM which documented grave violations against children.¹⁸¹ UNICEF also published a report in 2022, "25 Years of Children and Armed Conflict: Taking Action to Protect Children", with key recommendations aimed at intensifying the actions of the international and humanitarian communities and strengthening the programmatic response to better target and address the needs and vulnerabilities of all children living in situations of armed conflict.¹⁸² Additionally, UNICEF works with Member States' governments, community groups, and others to address the drivers of child recruitment and stop violations before they occur.¹⁸³

"The State of the World's Children" (SOWC), an annual report by UNICEF, delves into critical issues impacting children globally.¹⁸⁴ This comprehensive report is enriched with vital data and statistics, providing an analysis of trends and challenges faced by children worldwide. Including those affected by armed conflict.¹⁸⁵ For instance, previous editions have addressed topics like child labor, urbanization, and early childhood development, offering valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and advocates.¹⁸⁶ These reports not only inform global discourse but also influence UNICEF's strategies and programmatic interventions, ensuring a targeted response to the evolving needs of children worldwide.¹⁸⁷

Recruitment of Child Soldiers

Thousands of children worldwide have been recruited and exploited in armed conflicts, with over 105,000 verified cases between 2005 and 2022, as reported by UNICEF.¹⁸⁸ These child soldiers endure extensive exploitation beyond combat roles, serving as scouts, cooks, porters, and messengers, with many, especially girls, subjected to gender-based violence.¹⁸⁹ Often recruited through abduction, coercion, or

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights. *Committee on the Rights of the Child*. N.d.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Children*. N.d.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Children's Fund. *History*. N.d.

¹⁸¹ United Nations Children's Fund. *25 Years of Children and Armed Conflict*. 2022.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ United Nations Children's Fund. *Children recruited by armed forces or armed groups*. 2021.

¹⁸⁴ United Nations Children's Fund. *The State of the World's Children*. N.d.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ United Nations Children's Fund. *Children recruited by armed forces or armed groups*. 2021.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.



poverty-driven desperation, their involvement in armed groups constitutes a severe violation of child rights and international humanitarian law.¹⁹⁰ There are many reasons that children become associated with armed forces and groups; some children are abducted and physically coerced, others join military groups to escape poverty, to defend their communities, and some do it out of a feeling of wanting to get back at the oppression.¹⁹¹

In 2014, the SRSG-CAAC, in collaboration with UNICEF, launched the campaign “Children, Not Soldiers”, to reinforce the concept that child soldiers should not be utilized in conflict.¹⁹² The campaign was successful in reducing the number of child soldiers, as several Member States were involved in awareness campaigns, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Yemen.¹⁹³ Chad completed the reforms and measures included in its Action Plan signed with the United Nations and has significantly reduced the number of child recruits.¹⁹⁴ Over 400 children were released from the national army in Myanmar in 2014.¹⁹⁵ In 2014, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there was only one case of child recruitment by the national army, and the child was quickly released.¹⁹⁶ In 2014, there was a decline in the recruitment of children in Afghanistan, and only 5 cases were recorded by the SRSG-CAAC.¹⁹⁷

Another key challenge and priority for the SRSG-CAAC is engaging with non-State armed groups to end and prevent grave violations against children, as these groups are frequently listed in the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict.¹⁹⁸ While there are new opportunities for engagement, dialogue with these diverse actors is challenging due to their varying natures, environments, and objectives.¹⁹⁹ Cooperation from governments is crucial, and the Special Representative advocates for governments to facilitate dialogue between the United Nations and non-state armed groups to protect children.²⁰⁰

The present conflict in South Sudan has concerns regarding the recruitment of child soldiers and is acting on provisions included in a previous Action Plan.²⁰¹ This includes the establishment of child protection units in a country's armed forces, and taking steps to criminalize the recruitment of children as that is not enough to guarantee that boys and girls will be fully protected if conflict strikes again.²⁰² Accountability is a key focus of the efforts to prevent child soldiers from being recruited, however, investigations and prosecutions of child recruiters are still infrequent, even in nations where such actions are criminalized.²⁰³ Verifying the age of soldiers also presents a significant challenge for many Member States, particularly those lacking reliable birth registration systems, requiring delicate procedures.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Child Recruitment and Use*. N.d.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *A Year of Progress for "Children, Not Soldiers"*. 2015.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Engagement with Parties to Conflict Who Commit Grave Violations Against Children*. N.d.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *A Year of Progress for "Children, Not Soldiers"*. 2015.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.



Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers

As defined by SRSG-CAAC, reintegration refers to the peaceful and sustainable reintroduction of children previously associated with armed groups or armed forces back into society, and rehabilitation requires addressing the trauma and loss of childhood they experienced.²⁰⁵ UNICEF states that the successful reintegration of children into society post-conflict is contingent on factors including the reason for their association with armed groups and community perceptions.²⁰⁶ However, many children face suspicion, rejection, or struggle to assimilate, which is compounded by psychological distress hindering expression of their experiences.²⁰⁷ Families and communities, grappling with their trauma due to the armed conflict, may struggle to understand or accept returning children, necessitating support to facilitate their reintegration, alongside assistance for the numerous children transitioning out of armed forces annually to rebuild their lives.²⁰⁸

UNICEF oversees the reintegration of former child soldiers, focusing initially on preparing them for civilian life through psychosocial support, education, and training programs; while reuniting children with their families and communities.²⁰⁹ In response to Goal Area 3 of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021, UNICEF responded to the needs of more than 13,000 child survivors addressing their release and reintegration, by providing a safe place for them to live upon release, as well as community-based services for case management, family tracing, reunification and psychosocial support.²¹⁰ The reintegration of former child soldiers is a complex and ongoing process, highlighted by the launch of the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers by the Special Representative and UNICEF in September 2018, aiming to raise awareness and provide innovative solutions for reintegration, humanitarian assistance, and financing programs.²¹¹

Although several programs have been established to rehabilitate and reintegrate child soldiers, there are still several challenges pending.²¹² Releasing children from national forces is crucial, but support is needed to help them rebuild their lives; community-based programs offering psycho-social support, education, and vocational opportunities are essential for their future.²¹³ Assisting children and communities not only prevents re-recruitment but also fosters peace and stability.²¹⁴ Reuniting child soldiers with their families and communities can be challenging, especially if there is distrust or resentment towards them.²¹⁵ Finally, former child soldiers often face stigma and discrimination when attempting to reintegrate into their communities, as they may be viewed with suspicion or fear due to their association with armed groups, making it difficult for them to rebuild their lives and access support services.²¹⁶

²⁰⁵ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Reintegration of former child soldiers*. 2018.

²⁰⁶ United Nations Children's Fund. *Children recruited by armed forces or armed groups*. 2021.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Questions and Answers on the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers*. 2023.

²¹⁰ United Nations Children's Fund. *Children recruited by armed forces or armed groups*. 2021; United Nations Children's Fund. *UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021*. 2018.

²¹¹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers*. 2018.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *A Year of Progress for "Children, Not Soldiers"*. 2015.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers*. 2018.

²¹⁶ Ibid.



Conclusion

The issue of children in armed conflict presents a profound challenge to the international community, demanding urgent and concerted action.²¹⁷ The establishment of key frameworks such as the CRC, the *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, and regional initiatives like the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, provide critical guidance and standards for the protection of children affected by armed conflict.²¹⁸ The role of the Security Council, SRSG-CAAC, and UNICEF are essential in addressing the challenges faced by children in armed conflict.²¹⁹ Despite significant progress, challenges persist, particularly in addressing the recruitment of child soldiers, ensuring their successful rehabilitation, reintegration into society, and enforcing robust measures to prevent and demobilize them, which remains a grave violation of international humanitarian law.²²⁰ Similarly, the rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers demand sustained and comprehensive support, encompassing psychosocial assistance, education, vocational training, and community engagement.²²¹ Addressing the issue of child soldiers in armed conflicts is imperative for upholding international humanitarian principles and safeguarding the rights of vulnerable children, thereby contributing to global efforts to mitigate the impact of conflicts and foster sustainable peace and stability.²²²

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How effective are international legal frameworks in protecting children affected by armed conflict? What are the root causes of the recruitment of child soldiers in different conflict settings, and how do they vary across regions? What measures have been most successful in preventing the recruitment of child soldiers, and what challenges remain in implementing these measures effectively? What are the long-term psychosocial impacts of child soldiers, and what interventions are most effective in supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers? How do societal factors influence the stigmatization and acceptance of former child soldiers within their communities, and what strategies can be employed to promote their successful reintegration?

²¹⁷ Peace Research Institute Oslo. *Children Affected by Armed Conflict, 1990–2022*. 2023.

²¹⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*. 1989; United Nations, General Assembly. *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (A/RES/54/263)*. 2000.

²¹⁹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Annual Report*. N.d.

²²⁰ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *A Year of Progress for "Children, Not Soldiers."* 2015; United Nations Children's Fund. *25 Years of Children and Armed Conflict*. 2022.

²²¹ United Nations Children's Fund. *25 Years of Children and Armed Conflict*. 2022.

²²² Ibid.



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