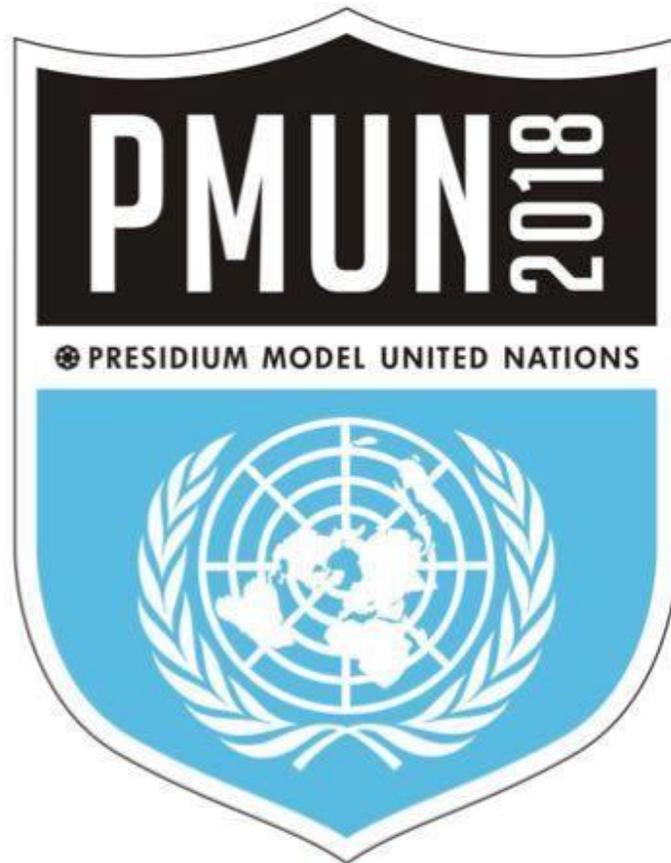


PRESIDIUM MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE 2018

“Discussion on the situation of migrant and refugee children at the risk of exploitation”



**PRESIDIUM *for*
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

**UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)
TOPIC STUDY GUIDE PREPARED FOR PMUN 2018**

“Discussion on the situation of migrant and refugee children at the risk of exploitation”

Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings!

At the outset, we would like to tell you that it gives us immense pleasure to serve as your Executive Board for the simulation of the UNICEF at Presidium MUN 2017. Our agenda for the committee is - **Discussion on the situation of migrant and refugee children at the risk of exploitation.**

To begin with, this paper, called the “background guide” in common parlance, has been written with the thought that it will serve as a map for you to navigate through the mass of information which you may across in your preparation for the conference. It will also guide you to understand the different angles to the forthcoming discussion, a sort of a reflection of what is in store for you. Thus, as the name “map” may be hinting, it will not provide you with all the information or analysis on the agenda at hand. To unfortunately break it you, you will have to work a bit beyond just reading this paper. Please don't be a lazy bum.

So we hope that we will be able to critically examine the agenda and come up with solutions, or maybe measures, which we can adopt to resolve the current crises and prevent future crises. Just remember that being a problem solver is your primary role as a participant in this discussion, even if you may have to speak from the perspective of the respective governments which you are going represent.

We are thrilled that you all have the opportunity to take part in the committee we have to offer this year; you will most certainly not be disappointed. Also, as you prepare for the conference, do not forget that you have a wide variety of resources available to you. Your members of the executive board are more than willing to give advice on any aspect of the conference, so please do not hesitate to contact us. We are especially happy to help newer delegates who may not have a lot of Model UN experience, so if you are not sure what is expected in a position paper or do not know where to begin your research, please send us an email. There is no such thing as a stupid question! Everyone is new to Model UN at least once, and it is our job to make sure you have the best possible experience.

Oh! And we want you to know that it is not only going be about the “serious stuff”. We will hopefully grab a chance or two to also know each other better informally. So prepare to engage at different levels. We are eagerly looking forward to meet each one of you.

Regards

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UNICEF Background and Mission Statement

UNICEF, or the United Nations International Children’s Fund, was created in 1946 in order to bring humanitarian aid to mothers and children in developing countries. Their work encompasses healthcare, immunization, education, bringing water, sanitation, and hygiene to developing nations, and protecting children in dangerous situations. UNICEF works to ensure that children’s rights are ensured everywhere around the world, helping those that are especially vulnerable or disadvantaged in many ways. UNICEF envisions a world in which people come together as equals and dialogue so that all children, families and communities have access to the information, skills, technologies, and processes they need to generate solutions; are empowered to make informed choices, reach their full potential; and participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lives and realize their rights.

History

The General Assembly (GA) adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959. It determined that “children [should have] rights to protection, education, health care, shelter and good nutrition,” and formed the basis of the influential future document, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1990). Throughout the two decades following the Declaration, UNICEF focused on meeting small substantive goals in the area of children’s education, and also gaining popular support through the “Ambassador at Large” celebrity positions.

In 1979, the first “International Year of the Child” (1979) was declared in General Assembly resolution 31/169, wherein individuals and organizations around the world reaffirmed their commitment to children’s rights. UNICEF’s focus thus shifted towards holistically addressing the numerous issues facing children.

In the 1980s, with the groundbreaking 1987 UNICEF study “Adjustment with a Human Face,” UNICEF began to employ a human rightsbased approach to development and policy, shifting away from approaches to development that prioritized Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which had a negative marginalizing impact on health and education of children in the Global South.

The results of the “Adjustment with a Human Face” study led to the 1990 adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a document that took UNICEF over ten years to create with the assistance of governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), human rights advocates, lawyers, health specialists, social workers, educators, child development experts, and religious leaders, and was to become the “most widely- and rapidly-accepted human rights treaty in history.” Following the adoption of the CRC, UNICEF hosted an unprecedented World Summit for Children in 1990, which boasted the largest gathering of world leaders in history and helped incite a broadening of the debate on children in conflict

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in the Security Council in the 1990s. In the 2000s, UNICEF moved towards increasingly accessible global operations, creating the “Say Yes for Children” campaign, and in 2000 committed itself to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through the five main strategic areas of: young child survival and development; basic education and gender equality; HIV/AIDS and children; child protection; policy analysis, advocacy, and partnership for children’s rights.

Mandate

Mandated by the General Assembly, UNICEF advocates for the protection of children’s rights, helps meet their basic needs, and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. Collectively, UNICEF’s mandate is based on the concept that “nurturing and caring for children [is] the cornerstone of human progress.” The Convention on the Rights of the Child is still the guiding force for this mandate.

Mission Statement:

UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children.

UNICEF insists that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress.

UNICEF mobilizes political will and material resources to help countries, particularly developing countries, ensure a "first call for children" and to build their capacity to form appropriate policies and deliver services for children and their families.

UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children - victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation and those with disabilities.

UNICEF responds in emergencies to protect the rights of children. In coordination with United Nations partners and humanitarian agencies, UNICEF makes its unique facilities for rapid response available to its partners to relieve the suffering of children and those who provide their care.

UNICEF is nonpartisan and its cooperation is free of discrimination. In everything it does, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.

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UNICEF aims, through its country programmes, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social, and economic development of their communities.

UNICEF works with all its partners towards the attainment of the sustainable human development goals adopted by the world community and the realization of the vision of peace and social progress enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Statement of the Problem

Movement is part of life and living on. For children who are seeking asylum in countries that they hope will protect them, being on the move brings challenges and opportunities, risks and danger, where many others make decisions about them, as they decide for themselves how to go on, and how to be still, in the contexts and processes that surround them. Their movements from danger to safety are part of greater migratory flows that generate life, death, and uncertainty depending on the contexts of reception, resettlement or return.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are over 65.6 million individuals who were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. This is the largest known number of refugees for the past two decades. Among these asylum seekers there are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are children.

Of this population, child refugees are among some of the most vulnerable. From the forced nature of their displacement and the potential violence and conflict these children have to endure, to the difficulties they face in accessing education, health and other basic services in host countries, child refugees are increasingly being left behind in the global development process.

No matter why they move or how they arrive, children are at the centre of the world's population movements. No matter their condition or status, they are always children: entitled to protection, support and all the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Children have a right to be protected, to keep learning and to receive the care and services they need to reach their full potential. Every child has the same rights, and they retain those rights no matter where they are.

When children are given the opportunities to succeed, both their country of origin as well as its host nation can benefit from their skills, creativity as well as multicultural view of the world. Thus the UNICEF believes the global community cannot afford to ignore either the needs of these children or the opportunities they present, since they are the future of our society.

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Current Situation

At an age in which most kids need supervision to complete their homework, thousands of unaccompanied minors are crossing continents alone.

Today the refugee population is also one of the youngest with over half being children. This in turn means that globally, today nearly 1 in every 200 children is a refugee. These numbers have seen a dramatic increase in the past several years. From 2005 to 2015, the number of child refugees under UNHCR’s protection jumped from 4 million to over 8 million. Between 2010 and 2015 this number rose by 77%. Considering that today nearly 250 million children live in regions affected by conflict, it is likely that the number of child refugees will continue to rise. The escalation in the number of child refugees has also led to an increase in the number of children fleeing and seeking refuge alone. According to Eurostat, since 2008 nearly 200,000 unaccompanied minors have applied for asylum in Europe, 100,000 of them for 2015 alone.

It is important to emphasize that there is equal representation of girls and boys in the refugee population, which implies that the causes leading children to leave their homelands affect both boys and girls alike. However, the experiences of fleeing a country have a differential impact associated with the age of the child. It was previously assumed that young children do not suffer the consequences of being uprooted. However, the neuroscience research has shown that brain development, which occurs during early childhood, is extremely sensitive to toxic stress.

The outflow of child refugees is concentrated geographically in many regions. In the current century, three quarters of all child refugees come from ten countries mostly in Africa and Asia and over 50% come from the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan.

I. Current Crises

a. Syrian Child Refugee Crisis

It's one thing to see the statistics. After 7 years of war, Syria is now the #1 most dangerous country to have a child. Not only that, but grave child rights violations continue. That means killing, maiming, sexual violence, abduction, recruitment into combat, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access. Since the onset of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, more than 5.3 million people, including 2.5 million children, have been living as registered refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt (UNHCR data portal, 26 November 2017). More than 90 per cent of these refugees are living in host communities and facing challenging socio-economic conditions, including high poverty rates (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2018-2019), high costs of living, limited livelihood opportunities and the exhaustion of savings. These circumstances have led to negative

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coping practices—such as removing children from school, particularly girls, to work or marry—further exacerbating existing protection risks.

In September 2017, the United Nations Refugees Agency (UNCHR) announced that staggering numbers of refugee children do not have access to education. Of the 17.2 million refugees under UNCHR’s mandate, 6.4 million are of school age. In 2016, more than half of them, 3.5 million children, did not go to school 1.5 Million of those school-aged children are Syrian refugees living in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Although there has been a vast improvement and education is becoming more accessible, at least 530.000 Syrian children living in these countries are still out of school. This problem is largely due to insufficient funding and to restrictive refugee policies. In 2016, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that globally, less than 2 per cent of donor support was allocated to education in emergencies. On top of that, most of these funds go to primary education, rendering access to secondary education for refugee children even more uncertain than to primary education.

Education can also play a key role in the improvement of children’s mental health. A sense of normalcy, safety and routine are crucial to children’s development. Without schools and other support programs, there is a higher risk that children will suffer from depression, will become withdrawn and will begin feeling hopeless about their future.

The recent bombing of Syria by the U.S.A had a dramatic and perjuring effect on Syrian refugee children. The gas attack in Syria has killed families in their homes. At least 42 people are dead, including infants and toddlers, and another 500 are injured (UNICEF, 2018). According to UNICEF statistics this year, more than 5 million Syrian refugee children will require education assistance 3.8 million will require protection support and 7.5 million will be in need of health assistance. The status of Syrian refugee children is of emergency. Children are facing the risk of losing their lives because of the chemical weapons launched because of the war. It is essential to take urgent actions on the matter before it is too late.

b. Child Refugee Crisis in Rohingya

The Rohingya, who numbered around one million in Myanmar at the start of 2017, are one of the many ethnic minorities many countries. Rohingya Muslims represent the largest percentage of Muslims in Myanmar, with the majority living in Rakhine state. They have their own language and culture and say they are descendants of Arab traders and other groups who have been in the region for generations. But the government of Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country, denies the Rohingya citizenship and even excluded them from the 2014 census, refusing to recognize them as a people. It sees them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. At least 6,700 Rohingya, including at least 730 children under the age of five, were killed in the month after the violence broke out, according to “Medecins Sans Frontieres” (MSF). Amnesty International says the Myanmar military also raped and abused Rohingya women and girls. This is being named as one of the worse ethnic cleansing

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cases. The plight of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people is said to be the world's fastest growing refugee crisis. Risking death by sea or on foot, more than half a million have fled the destruction of their homes and persecution in the northern Rakhine province of Myanmar (Burma) for neighboring Bangladesh since August 2017. Myanmar's military says it is fighting Rohingya militants and denies targeting civilians.

"Houses were burning. There were rocket launchers. They were killing people after arresting them, that's why we fled here." This are the words from Umme, a 12 year old living in a Rohingyan refugee camp. This is a story no child should tell. Yet, it's an all-too-familiar one in the Bangladesh refugee settlements, where UNICEF is helping Rohingya survivors of what UN Human Rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein has deemed "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing." More than 520,000 vulnerable Rohingya children like her are living in the path of a looming threat. With monsoon season approaching, the overcrowded camps they call home ran the risk of being swept away. Situated on land cleared for the influx of 390,000 Rohingya since August, the refugees' new homes are tents perched on barren hillsides that the coming rains will turn to mud. Landslides could claim countless lives, and severe flooding destroy the camps' fragile sanitation infrastructure, contaminating the water supply. For families living in cramped quarters, cholera outbreaks and other waterborne illnesses are all too likely. UNICEF is now mobilizing to keep Rohingya children safe, healthy and dry during cyclone season. Vital infrastructure is being reinforced and medical supplies prepositioned to handle the rise of illnesses like cholera — an acute diarrhoeal disease that can kill a child within hours if not treated. The water supply is being treated, and supplies families will need to keep their water safe and clean — hygiene kits, water purification tablets, chlorine, soap and buckets — stockpiled. Vaccination teams are administering the oral cholera vaccine to 1.1 million people, and community volunteers are fanning out to educate families about how to protect themselves. But it's a race against time to spare Umme and Rohingya refugee children like her another fight for their lives. "I've been in some difficult places," says Martin Worth, UNICEF's Head of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. "But this could get so much worse. What is already a dire humanitarian situation could become a catastrophe."

c. Venezuelan Refugee Crisis

Venezuela is in an economic free fall. As a result of government-led mismanagement and corruption, the currency value is plummeting, prices are hyperinflated, and gross domestic product (GDP) has fallen by over a third in the last five years. In an economy that produces little except oil, the government has cut imports by over 75 percent, choosing to use its hard currency to service the roughly \$140 billion in debt and other obligations. These economic choices have led to a humanitarian crisis. Basic food and medicines for Venezuela's approximately thirty million citizens are increasingly scarce, and the devastation of the health-care system has spurred outbreaks of treatable diseases and rising death rates.

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President Nicolas Maduro is pushing the nation toward authoritarianism, shutting down the free press, marginalizing the opposition-led legislature, barring opposition parties from participating in elections, and imprisoning political opponents.

This humanitarian and economic crisis, combined with rising political persecution, has forced millions of Venezuelans to flee away. The number of Venezuelans seeking asylum has increased yearly since 2014. Between 2014-2017, around 99,000 asylum claims were lodged, half of which in 2017 alone (as of September). The primary receiving countries of Venezuelan asylum seekers in the region between 2014 and 2017 have been: USA: 46,000, Brazil: 16,500, Peru: 9,500; Costa Rica: 3,300 and Panama: 3,000. Considering the evolving situation in Venezuela, it is projected that people will continue to leave the country over the coming months.

Children migrating from Venezuela don't have the strength to endure the journey away from their nation, since they are severely malnourished. The government fails to provide families with food, in fact, according to the “Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida Venezuela 2016” by Venezuelan universities, nine out of 10 households in the country were “food insecure.” But it appears to be affecting infants at an overwhelming rate. The number of children under the age of 1 who died increased 30 percent in 2015, according to a Ministry of Health report which was later removed by the government. Women and children are flocking to the Colombian border town of Cúcuta in desperate need of medical care, food and shelter. Mothers sometimes leave children behind to be looked after by fathers and other family members. Pregnant women make treacherous, daylong journeys for medical care. Others have left behind their normal lives to ensure their children will have a meal the next day.

II. Repercussions of the Problem

a. Mental Health Crisis

Children, who comprise at least a quarter of asylum seekers, are exposed to numerous risk factors for psychological disturbance, including exposure to violence, forced displacement, and multiple losses. Refugee children suffer both from the effects of coming from a warzone and of adjusting to an unfamiliar culture. These stressors also affect their families. Moreover, consistent research findings show that as the number of risk factors accumulates for children, the likelihood that they will develop psychological disturbance dramatically increases. Studies of children in exile show that the prevalence of emotional and behavioral disorders is high, with the most frequent diagnostic categories being posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety with sleep disorders, and depression. A meta-analysis of data from 7,920 children affected by war found that 4.5 to 89.3 % of children met criteria for PTSD with an overall pooled estimate of 47 %, 43 % met criteria for depression, and 27 % met criteria for a non-PTSD anxiety disorder. According to the European Journal of Public Health, there

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is a lack of trauma and mental health screening and measurement tools developed directly for refugee youth, especially for young refugees below the age of six. The improvements in the development and/or adaptation of mental health tools are of uttermost importance. This is necessary because mental health specialists are using tools that aren't validated nor follow the guidelines to detect mental health problems in children. Detection and treatment of mental health issues among refugee children and youth should be a priority both within the scientific community and in practice in order to reduce morbidity and mortality.

b. Acculturation and Adaptation

Acculturation has been described as a dynamic process in which groups and individuals experience cultural and psychological change. Common components of acculturation involve learning a new language, norms, and customs, and becoming familiar with the mainstream culture. Refugee students face immeasurable academic challenges in their adjustment to their new environments. They frequently suffer from marginalization and discrimination, social alienation, lack of adult support, and difficulties accessing education. Refugee and asylum children and youth confront the bureaucracy and expectations of schooling and must often quickly learn to navigate a system whose policies and standards are unfamiliar and unknown. Few resettled refugees experience school programs that provide resources to meet their unique academic and linguistic needs. However, under the right conditions, education may help rebuild academic, social, and emotional well-being. Furthermore, refugees typically maintain high aspirations and optimism regarding schooling, which is a valuable educational resource. Schools need to learn how to develop welcoming learning communities for newcomers.

Whether their new homes are temporary or permanent, the future success of migrating and displaced children relies heavily on whether they are welcomed in those new homes. Research indicates that children are most likely to directly encounter discrimination in school settings, often in the form of insults, unfair treatment, exclusion and threats. Children who face these forms of discrimination and exclusion experience a range of direct repercussions such as distrust, hopelessness and problematic behaviors, as well as negative longer- term attitudes about schooling and their own potential.

Outside the classroom, migrant and refugee children and families can be subject to a wide array of discriminatory practices and behaviors that hinder their ability to settle into a new home. In many contexts, legal barriers continue to prevent migrant and refugee children from receiving services on an equal basis with other children. Even when legal barriers are removed, misinformation, prejudice and xenophobia continue to stand between children and the services they are entitled to receive. These problems can be intensified by formal and informal separation of refugee and other migrant families from host communities, making it

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more difficult to acquire relevant language and cultural skills or employment to overcome intense poverty.

In the worst cases, xenophobia may escalate to direct attacks. According to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, asylum reception centers throughout Europe have been repeatedly subjected to direct attack. In Germany alone, the Government tracked 850 attacks against refugee shelters in 2015.

c. Legal Status of Refugee Children

Bearing in mind children are faced with numerous amounts of threats while in the search for asylum, the UNHCR adopted a Policy on Refugee Children in October 1993. Synthesizing, the UNHCR was seeking to make clear that children are vulnerable, dependent and developing. This way, the difference between adults and children refugees is clearly stated, making it easier for authorities to take action regarding these minors. It is required for delegates to acknowledge that most children in search for asylum enter countries without company and illegally. It is a necessity to discuss about the responsibilities of different governments in the specific cases of illegal families with their children. It is stressed for the delegates to explore the possibilities of temporal visas or other alternatives to help solve these types of problems with optimum efficiency.

What should the legal status of refugee children be? It is essential for different countries to adapt their policies in order to find the most humane solutions without withering their own countries economy nor creating social controversy among their populations. Even though refugee children are one of the troubles regarding refugee crises themselves, it is requested from the delegates to focus solely on the refugee children and not to get off tracks. However, it is important for delegates to adapt solutions that won't disturb other countries' aspects while still concentrating on the children. Refugee children may come with families or alone. How will laws and policies differ from these children with families from unaccompanied minors? Some countries may not be able to offer asylum or proper care to children, therefore it is of uttermost importance to point out how substantial it is for host nations to establish laws regarding refugee minors.

It is thanks to laws that order is kept in place and work is done efficiently. Due to officially imposing a statement or making a legal status legit, is that different countries may be able to take an optimum approach.

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Relevant UN Actions

The right to seek and enjoy asylum in a foreign territory is guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR, Art. 14(1)], which was adopted in 1948 []. This was the first step taken by the UN regarding the status of refugees. But it wasn't until 1950, and after WWII left around 400,000 people homeless, that refugees started straggling across Europe. In 1950, the ambitious new global institution, the UN, created the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UNHCR has two principal functions: to provide international protection to refugees within its competence and to seek durable solutions for them in cooperation with governments. The UNHCR is founded in the principle of *non-refoulement* which means that States may not return a refugee to a country where his or her life or freedom would be threatened. Safeguarding refugees' basic human rights (including economic and social rights) in countries of asylum, and ensuring treatment as near as possible to that of local citizens. A corresponding article in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 35, entitled Co-operation of the national authorities with the United Nations, states as follows:

“(1) The Contracting States undertake to co-operate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees...in the exercise of its functions, and shall in particular facilitate its duty of supervising the application of the provision of this Convention.”

The 1951 Convention and its 1967 Optional Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees was one of the centerpieces to confront the growing issue of refugees. While all legal provisions in the 1951 Convention apply to refugee children and youths, too, there are no child- or youth specific provisions included in this instrument. It wasn't until the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was established, that provisions for refugee children were explicitly mentioned in Article 22. This convention was launched mainly with the cooperation of the UNICEF and it became the most widely- and rapidly-accepted human rights treaty in history. In Article 22, special protection and procedures rights are accorded to refugee children to enjoy the rights declared in the UNCRC and other international treaties applicable to them, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by their parents or by any other person.

In 1987, the UN Executive Committee requested a set of guidelines (Conclusion No. 47.), and the 1988 "Guidelines on Refugee Children" was published. In 1991, the Guidelines were evaluated in two reports, one by the International Save the Children Alliance in cooperation with UNHCR, and the other by the U.S. Bureau for Refugee Programs. In 1993, the "UNHCR Policy on Refugee Children" (reprinted in Annex A) was presented to and welcomed by the Executive Committee.

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Furthermore, in order to improve and enhance the protection and care of refugee children, the UNHCR adopted a Policy on Refugee Children, endorsed by the UNHCR Executive Committee in October 1993.

The UNHCR works along the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) to fulfill the needs of refugee children. UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is guided by the UNCRC and strives to establish children's rights as legal obligations, ensuring ethical principles and international standards of behavior towards children. UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children. Advocating for child rights is a core function of both UNICEF as an international organization and UNICEF National Committees in industrialized countries. As articulated in the UNICEF Child Protection Strategy [58], “UNICEF will promote child protection through advocacy in both developed and developing countries through research and evidence, existing partnerships and new opportunities.”

Since the start of its response in 2015, UNICEF has provided 261,000 refugee and migrant children with a range of services. In 2017, UNICEF used outreach teams to increase the identification and referral of at-risk children, reaching more than 15,300 children. An additional 9,800 children benefitted from psychosocial and community-based child protection support. More than 4,600 front-line workers in temporary care facilities for unaccompanied and separated children and reception and asylum centers across the region received training on child protection standards. UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations developed the roadmap 'The Way Forward to Strengthened Policies and Practices for Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Europe' to support Member States to reinforce related protection systems. More than 8,700 children aged 6 to 17 years participated in UNICEF-supported structured non-formal education activities. UNICEF policy support and technical assistance contributed to the inclusion of some 6,000 children in formal education. UNICEF mobilized partners to monitor the rights of refugee and migrant children. Joint communication and advocacy conducted with UNICEF National Committees raised awareness of the situation of refugee and migrant children and supported their social inclusion. With 148,000 refugee children in need there's still much work to be done, a continuous of care and protection is needed for children on the move, throughout their journeys, given the long-term impact that this experience will have on their lives.

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<https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/abuse-exploitation-and-trafficking-stark-reality-migrant-children-trying-reach-europe-%E2%80%93-un-report>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41423442>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/child-refugees-migrants-dunkirk-calais-france-unicef-people-trafficking-smugglers-a7689051.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/apr/18/child-refugees-in-europe-forced-to-sell-bodies-to-pay-smugglers>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/may/17/traffickers-smugglers-exploit-record-rise-unaccompanied-child-refugees-migrants-unicef-report>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/refugee-children-abuse-rampant-libya-unicef-170228081506910.html>

<http://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1002438>

Questions to Consider

What should the legal status of refugee children be? Should they be provided with provisional or permanent visas? What measures should be taken to protect the rights of refugee children and ensure their right as established in the UNC?

How should psychological disorders be classified in refugee children? What validated tools can be used to identify mental health issues in minors?

What measures can be taken to combat xenophobia, discrimination and marginalization in host nations? Should community-based approaches be taken for refugee children to adapt to their new environment?

How can access to education and social protection, be increased for children? Is there any way we can create opportunities for family income and youth employment?

What should the approach of governments and the private sector be, when providing health, education and shelter to refugee children? In which way can the legal status of children become an opportunity and not a barrier for giving them access to basic need?

What actions can be taken to improve the access to better data on children’s movements and welfare? What guidelines should researchers and data analytics follow? How can we make better use of existing data, and share it?

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Bloc Positions

I. Africa

Approximately one half of African refugees are children, nearly 3 million children who have been forced from their own countries and are confronting the world’s harshest realities. Currently there are 3.4 million refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa, up from 3.1 million in 2012, and 5.4 million internally displaced people. Furthermore, many African countries, such as Ethiopia and Kenya, are currently hosting together about 800,000 South Sudanese refugees. Additionally, in just one year the refugee population in Uganda has more than doubled from 500,000 to more over 1.25 million, making the country host to the fastest growing refugee emergency in the world. The continent’s expected population growth, migration will become an increasingly pressing issue for Africa. The best way to capture the opportunities of Africa’s young and mobile population, while protecting children from its potential dangers, is by preparing now.

II. South America

The Venezuelan refugee crisis is at the top of the South American agenda. Since the Venezuelan borders are closed, thousands of children take the risk of negotiating with smugglers and human traffickers, to get them out of their nation illegally. Reports inform that unaccompanied minors traveling to different nations, find themselves dragged into sexual working or are coerced to commit crimes. Although the Venezuelan situation is very severe, many Venezuelans continue to arrive in neighbouring countries and beyond, in need of international protection and assistance, particularly access to shelter, health, education, and other essential services. Host countries and governments receiving Venezuelans have been working hard to provide an appropriate response; however, they are increasingly overstretched and need more international support. There has been a 2,000% increase in the number of Venezuelan nationals seeking asylum worldwide since 2014, principally in the

Americas during the last year. The main countries where Venezuelans are migrating are Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Panama and Mexico. In Peru, on the inauguration day, INTERPOL’s online system in collapsed as nearly 6,000 requests were made on the first hours. According to INTERPOL, they are granting 120 daily appointments (UNHCR update, March 2018). In this period of international relations, it would be expected for these countries to take on a larger role. As for possible solutions, South American countries have the position to be facilitators due to their unique perspective of having refugee issues but also having resources.

III. Middle East

“Discussion on the situation of migrant and refugee children at the risk of exploitation”

Five years of relentless conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic had forced more than 4.9 million Syrians beyond the country's borders by the end of 2015, about half of them children. Another one-third of the population is internally displaced. Syrian children inside and outside of the country have been subjected to a wide range of abuses, including recruitment into armed groups, exploitation and abuse, child marriage and the worst forms of child labor. Half of Syrian refugee children living in neighboring countries are estimated to be out of school, and children continue to suffer several physical and mental health impacts of war and displacement. More than half of Syrian refugee children living outside the country were out of school in March 2016. Refugee children face many challenges in accessing and succeeding at school, including the denial in access to school because of legal barriers, lack of documentation, discrimination and language barriers. In Pakistan, there were close to 300,000 refugees originating in Pakistan in 2015. Children accounted for 58 per cent of all Pakistani-origin refugees, the highest proportion in the region. While this generation of children in the region faces incredible challenges, they also possess immense potential to build a new and different future for their countries. Most Middle Eastern states have similar positions and outlooks as African ones. These countries want to see increased assistance in their own borders through increased NGO presence as well as more support from developed countries.

V. Western Countries

Western countries have little to no refugee situations of their own. Furthermore, they have been criticized by the international community for not hosting as many refugees as they could. Western states have the disposable income to provide monetary and technological resources for proposed solutions in UNHCR. The position of Western countries should be that of innovation and facilitation. In order to assist child refugees as well as keep refugee populations low in their own countries, Western states will want to provide as much assistance as possible to improving existing refugee camps' conditions. Furthermore, although these countries are geographically separated from many of the world's most problematic areas, they should explore solutions to make asylum realistic for refugees. Finally, these countries' complex refugee legislations makes asylum difficult, rendering reforms to these laws is crucial.