

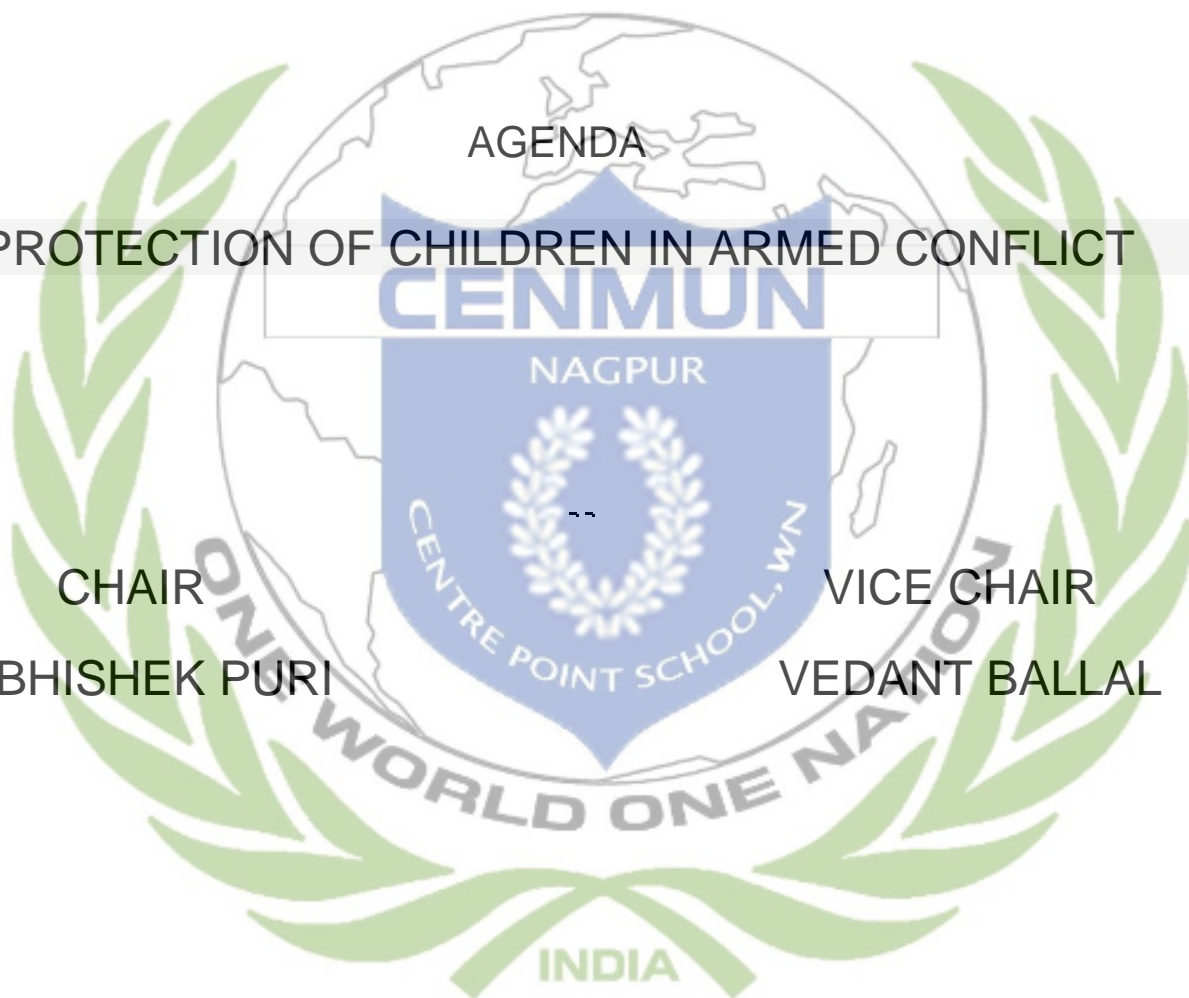
# UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

AGENDA

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

CHAIR  
ABHISHEK PURI

VICE CHAIR  
VEDANT BALLAL



# UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Honorable delegates,

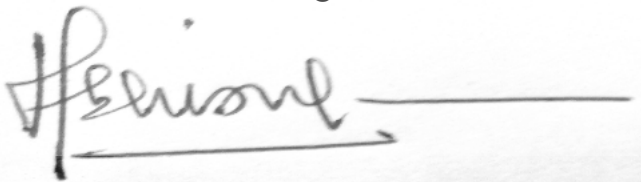
It is my utmost pleasure to welcome you to The CENMUN 2017! I'm honored and excited to direct the UNICEF committee and look forward to meeting you all. To the MUN veterans out there, I hope you'll have an enriching debate and to the newcomers, I'm really excited to be a part of your experience.

What I desire from the delegates is not experience, or how articulate they are. Rather, I want to see how he/she can respect differences of opinion and work around these, while extending their own stance so that it encompasses more of the others without compromising their own stand, thereby reaching acceptable, and practical solutions.

The following pages are supposed to guide you with the agenda as well as the Council. The Guide touches upon all the different aspects that are relevant and is expected to contribute to fruitful speaking sessions in the Council. However, it has to be noted that the background guide only contains basic information which may form the basis for the speech and your research.

I hope that you put in substantial efforts to research and get all of the important facets of the agenda. Let's make the Council's direction and debate positive and productive.

Good luck Delegates.



**ABHISHEK PURI**

*Chairperson*

## AGENDA- PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICTS.

### INTRODUCTION TO UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is a programme and fund of the United Nations, reporting to the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly.

In 1946, United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) resolution 57 (I) established the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) as a relief organization for European child refugees after the Second World War.

UNICEF had been created with the assistance of governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), human rights advocates, lawyers, health specialists, social workers, educators, child development experts, and religious leaders, and it became the "most widely and rapidly accepted human rights treaty in history."

In the early 2000s, UNICEF committed itself to implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through five main strategic areas: young child survival and development; basic education and gender equality; HIV/AIDS and children; child protection; and policy analysis, advocacy, and partnerships for children's rights.<sup>11</sup> In 2001, UNICEF created the "Say Yes for Children" campaign, which advocated globally for the inalienable rights of children.

UNICEF is the primary entity within the UN system working to promote and protect the rights of children, who are often disproportionately affected by conflict, instability, and poverty. Partnerships are essential to the success and impact of UNICEF projects, which depend upon cooperation with non-governmental organizations, UN entities,

Member States, and other stakeholders. UNICEF is also involved in planning and executing concrete action from emergency relief to development programs through its on-the-ground presence in over 190 countries.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, it is estimated that approximately 90 per cent of current war casualties are civilians while a century ago 90 per cent of those who had lost their lives were members of the armed forces. A majority of the civilian casualties of today are women and children. Although armed conflicts affect the societies as a whole, children especially girls particularly suffer in these times because of their status of their sex and the physical strength of children in the society. The biggest problem beneath the victimization of women through sexual violence is indeed, a problem of perspective towards the concept of sex and gender. Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define whether a person is a man or woman. On the other hand, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors and activities that the society considers to be appropriate for men and women. The inequality created and imposed by the society through the gender roles, leads to many serious problems. Sexual violence during armed conflicts is one of them.

Thus, it is absolutely important to protect children's rights during the times of armed conflict. Providing and securing children's rights is still a challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, even in societies which are not actively involved in armed conflicts. This challenge consequently grows within the armed conflicts.



Today, violation of G's rights and most particularly, the usage of sexual violence as a weapon is one of the biggest human rights issue of our age. Protecting women's rights and preventing any form of sexual violence would be a tremendous step towards securing world peace and development.

Thus, this problem should be analyzed and examined in detail to be able to come up with effective and comprehensive solutions which are desperately needed.

### OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

Women and girls suffered disproportionately during and after war, as existing inequalities were magnified, and social networks broke down, making them more vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations told the Security Council on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2003.

Whenever there has been conflict, women and children have been known to receive the hard end of the stick. Women and children are often the most vulnerable and prone to being hit the hardest.

Throughout history we see examples of terrible abuses against women and children. From the 1.1 million children killed during the Holocaust to the many women and children raped or killed during the Rwandan Genocide.

Women who survive these atrocities often have to live with the vivid and terrifying images of rape, war and death for the rest of their lives. They also suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, stigmatization and sometimes unwanted pregnancies. They are faced with the daunting task of keeping families together after displacement, providing food, clothing and shelter in what is in most instances, destroyed infrastructure, for their children and their families. The effects of war continue for years after the fighting ends. Many women

are left widowed and many children are orphaned. Women struggle to sustain livelihoods for their children after conflict.

The all too frequent state collapse, protracted conflicts, civil wars, ongoing violence, skirmishes, and instability in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Somalia paint a picture of a world in the midst of a serious crisis of conscience, which puts the efficacy of political global governance bodies, international organizations, and governing international legal regimes in question.

In the inter- and intra- state wars, women and children are the most common, helpless and defenseless victims of conflict, who suffer debilitating long-term consequences. Whilst severe conflict, state failure, civil and ethnic wars increase male mortality due to direct participation, female mortality is a result of indirect armed conflict participation with devastating public health impacts.

Women suffer disproportionately due to “disability; poor living conditions; malnutrition; sexual disease; pregnancy related diseases and intentional injury” in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. Post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and suicide are among some of the more crippling mental health conditions.

Sexual violence, rape, the ‘burden of caring for others’, which increases in times of conflict, makes women a particularly vulnerable at risk demographic, which imperils the lives and futures of their children and carries generational effects.

In addition, the very notion of vulnerability demands an appreciation of what makes people vulnerable. This differs according to whether one is male or female, adult or child, rich or poor, deprived of freedom, displaced or a member of the civilian population generally. As women and men have different, culturally-determined social roles, they experience conflict in different ways. It is imperative to recognize these diverse factors of vulnerability and their consequences in order

to adapt responses accordingly.

The World Health Report 2001, estimated that '310,000 deaths [in 2000 alone] were directly caused by conflict' and an average of 4.75 years of life are lost due to direct armed violence or premature mortality caused by conflict.'

Humanitarian NGOs estimate that during the last ten years, an estimated 10 million children have also been killed as a result of armed conflicts, while the young survivors have been left traumatized, exploited, wounded, mutilated or disabled.

Separation from parents and the extended family makes children vulnerable to sexual victimization and civilian targets of antipersonnel mine and cluster bomb maiming in addition to involuntary enlistment as child soldiers or imprisonment and forced labor. Lack of access to healthcare, basic sanitation, and education has irreversible lifetime consequences.

One in every nine children is raised in a conflict zone, according to a UNICEF report released on Tuesday. Two hundred and fifty million young people are living in warzones and with the number of people fleeing these regions at its highest since World War II, every second refugee is a child.

In 2015 alone, some 75 million children were born into conflict zones, said the report. What complicates matters, the UN agency said, is that on top of the risks to health and safety, regional violence blocks access to education.

Among the most severe problems which all children and women face during armed conflicts is a heightened risk of rape, sexual humiliation, prostitution and other forms of gender-based violence. Women of all ages are targets, but adolescent girls are especially vulnerable. While most victims have been girls, young boys are also raped or forced into prostitution - although such cases are generally under-reported.



Recent developments in warfare have significantly heightened the dangers for children. During the last decade, it is estimated (and these figures, while specific, are necessarily orders of magnitude) that child victims have included:

- 2 million killed;
- 4-5 million disabled;
- 12 million left homeless;
- more than 1 million orphaned or separated from their parents;
- some 10 million psychologically traumatized

We know that numerous armed groups are recruiting and using children for logistical support, handling ammunition, manning checkpoints and as combatants. Recruitment of children or pressure to join groups is also occurring among refugee populations in neighboring countries - a disturbing trend.

It is said that children who witness the killings and destruction around them, children who are separated from their families, and children who are abused sexually and otherwise, very often suffer from psychological and emotional distress.

## DEFINITIONS

### 1. WHAT IS A WAR?

- War is a state of armed conflict between societies. It is generally characterized by extreme aggression, destruction, and mortality, using regular or irregular military forces.
- a state of usually open and declared armed hostile conflict between states or nations.
- a state of hostility, conflict, or antagonism.



- a struggle or competition between opposing forces or for a particular end.

## 2. WHAT ARE WAR ZONES/CONFLICT ZONES?

- a zone in which belligerents are waging war; *broadly*: an area marked by extreme violence.
- a designated area especially on the high seas within which rights of neutrals are not respected by a belligerent nation in time of war.
- a combat zone where military operations are coordinated.
- a region in which a war is being fought.
- (during wartime) a combat area in which the rights of neutrals are suspended, as such an area on the high seas, where ships flying a neutral flag are subject to attack.
- Conflict zone refers to war or political instability that disrupts essential services such as housing, transportation, communication, sanitation, water, and health care which requires the response of people outside of the community affected.

### A. CHILDREN HEALTH UNDER ATTACK

Thousands of children die each year as a direct result of armed violence, but millions more die from the indirect consequences of

warfare - as a result of the disruption in food supplies, destruction of health services, water systems and sanitation.

In poor countries where children are already vulnerable to malnutrition and disease, the onset of armed conflict can increase death rates by up to 24 times - with the under-five years at particular risk. The indirect effects of war are profound, under-appreciated and preventable. Epidemics, lack of access to medical facilities or a breakdown in food security may also be crisis events that provide the final impetus to conflict in some cases. Population displacement worsens hygiene and facilitates the spread of communicable diseases. Preliminary research suggests that for every battle death, many more people die as a result of disease or other factors connected to the war. Malaria, acute respiratory infections, diarrhoeal diseases, vaccine-preventable and other infectious diseases continue to be the leading causes of morbidity, disability and mortality among children.

## **B. PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS**

Children may display a wide range of emotional and physiological reactions following a disaster. Severe trauma during childhood can have a devastating effect on the development of the brain and all functions mediated by this complex organ. Posttraumatic stress responses have been documented in children who have suffered traumatic loss of their parents, siblings and peers. The more severe psychological reactions are associated with variables such as a higher degree of exposure (e.g., life threat, direct physical injury, witnessing a death or injury), closer proximity to the disaster, history of prior traumas, female gender, poor parental response and parental psychopathology. Children who are directly affected by the conflict, including bombardment and home demolition, developed greater incidence of post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) and fear. Children living in war zones can express acute distress from various traumatic events through emotional problems that may manifest as PTSD,

dissociative disorders, anxiety and substance abuse.

## A. SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN WAR ZONES

Sexual violence is used as a strategy or a weapon of war during armed conflicts. It is often condoned or even encouraged by the authorities and is motivated by a variety of factors. A commonly held perspective towards sexual violence throughout the history is that women are considered as "spoils" of war to which soldiers are entitled. Sexual slavery was used as a means of troop mollification and motivation: women had been given to soldiers and sexually abused in order to reward and motivate them.<sup>xli</sup> This notion is mainly caused by the objectification of women which is a rooted belief within patriarchy and one of the biggest obstacles regarding women's right as a whole.

Another reason the usage of sexual violence as a weapon is the aim of demoralizing the adversary group. Specifically in societies in which the honour of women and sexuality are considered to be closely related, men who have failed to "protect their women" are humiliated. In many communal societies, the rape of a woman in a is likely to affect not only the victim but the whole family and destroy the pride and dignity of the community. The demoralization, shame and intimidation therefore force large groups of people to take flight. To put it in other words, sexual violence is often used in order to terrorize the population and accelerate the forced displacement of masses.

In the "Lives Blown Apart" report, Amnesty International had described sexual violence "as a weapon to destabilise communities and sow terror".

In addition, it can be used as a form of punishment, particularly where women are politically active or are resisting, threatening people and dissuading any kind of opposition.



Last but not least, sexual violence can be used for ethnic cleansing purposes, in order to change the ethnic makeup of the new generation.

## WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

In recent years, much attention has been devoted by international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics and certain governments to the plight, needs and rights of women and children affected by armed conflict. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) published *Women Facing War* (2001), a study on the impact of armed conflict on women; the United Nations Security Council adopted Security Council Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security” (2000) which resulted in the production of a number of studies on this theme, by the Division for the Advancement of Women (2002) and UNIFEM (2002).

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) tries to protect the wounded, sick, prisoners of war and civilians in the hands of enemies. Though IHL instruments seem to be comprehensive, they do not cover the full range of human suffering caused by war.

The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977 and customary IHL provide this general protection. IHL requires humane treatment for the wounded and sick, prisoners and civilians caught up in a conflict, without any “adverse distinction” based on sex, race, nationality, religion, political opinions, or any similar criteria. The provisions of IHL also forbid hostage-taking and the use of human shields.

Furthermore, the Fourth Geneva Convention contains a number of articles which provide special protection to children.

Strides and efforts continue to be made to bring women to the forefront as agents of peace and positive political change. The UN Security Council recognizes women's inclusion strengthens prospects of sustainable peace. In October 2000, the resolution 1325 was adopted which recognizes the role of women in strengthening their participation in decision-making, ending sexual violence and impunity and providing an accountability system.

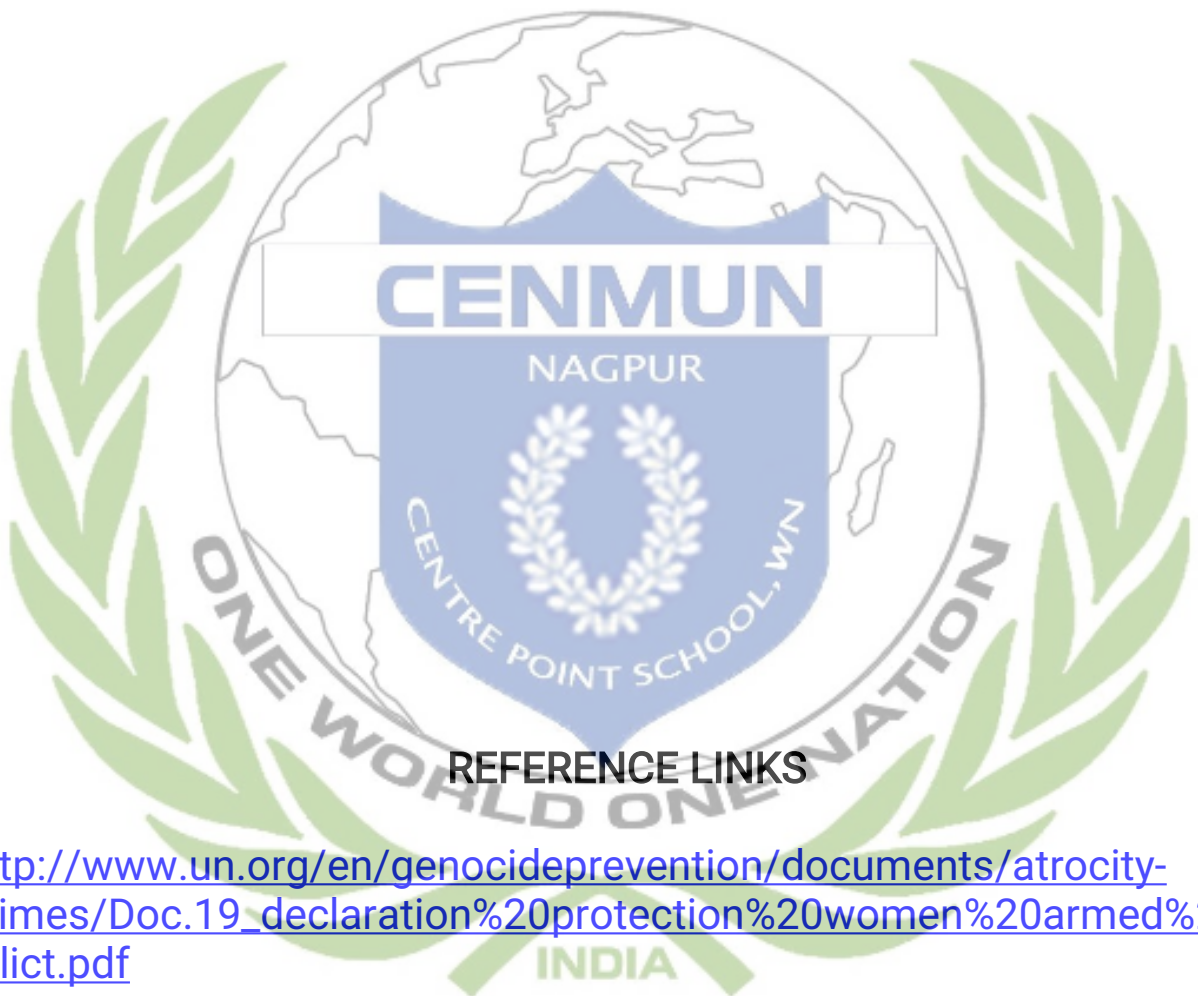
UN Women also supports projects that focus on increasing women's participation in decision-making, promoting the use of gender perspectives in policy development, strengthening the protection of women affected by conflict, countering conflict-related sexual violence, amplifying calls for accountability and advancing the status of women in post-conflict settings.

While convention and treaty law has over the last fifty years vigorously extended the normative framework for action and offered protections to the most vulnerable members of society while also preserving principles of equality and non-discrimination under law, our conflict-ridden twenty-first century has yet to make good on the lofty promises *qua* actionable rights enshrined in international law, particularly with regards to women and children.

## CONCLUSION

Violations of women's and children's rights in armed conflicts are a very important and current problem which humanity needs to eliminate immediately. Violence against them has taken many lives, destroyed the honor and dignity of millions and has disrupted many families and societies, leaving traumatic traces in many cultures. This destructive shame of humanity still continues. Both genders need to take a step, handle this problem and work together for peace, gender equality, better opportunities and for rebuilding societies.

The solutions require the world's commitment to work on one of the darkest sides of armed conflicts. Despite the great challenges, possible effective and comprehensive solutions could save lives and be a tremendous step towards world peace.



#### REFERENCE LINKS

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