

Cerritos Fall Conference 2019

UNICEF



Topic: Child Soldiers

Director: Jayden Kim

October 12, 2019

To Delegates of Cerritos Novice 2019 Conference

Dear Delegates,
Welcome to Cerritos Novice 2019!

It is our highest honor and pleasure to welcome you all to our annual novice conference here at Cerritos High School. On behalf of the Cerritos High School Model United Nations program, we are proud to host another year of this long-standing conference, where you will become more knowledgeable on international issues, participate in intellectually stimulating discussions, and create new and everlasting friendships.

The CHSMUN program continues to compete around the world as a nationally ranked MUN program. Our delegates utilize diplomacy in order to create complex solutions towards multilateral issues in the global community. Our head chairs are selected from only the best seniors of our program, undergoing a rigorous training process to ensure the highest quality of moderating and grading of debate. Furthermore, all the topic synopses have been reviewed and edited numerous times. We strongly believe that by providing each and every delegate with the necessary tools and understanding, he or she will have everything they need to thrive in all aspects of committee. We thoroughly encourage each delegate to engage in all of the facets of their topic, in order to grow in their skills as a delegate and develop a greater knowledge of the world around them.

Our advisors and staff have put in countless hours to ensure delegates have an amazing experience at the conference. Our greatest hope is that from attending CHSMUN 2019, students are encouraged to continue on in Model United Nations and nevertheless, inspired to spark change in their surrounding communities. With 31 high school committees and 2 middle school committees, CHSMUN 2019 will provide a quality experience for beginners to learn, develop, and grow as delegates.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact us! We look forward to seeing you at CHSMUN Novice 2019!

Sincerely,

Brianna Roldan and Tess U-Vongcharoen

Secretary-Generals

UNICEF

Child Soldiers

A Note From the Director

Delegates,

Hello everyone! Welcome to the 2019 Cerritos Novice Conference! My name is Jayden Kim, and I will be the director of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) for this conference. I am now a senior at Cerritos High School and this is my third year in MUN. Through MUN, I have been able to overcome my fear of public speaking and have been able to forge amazing connections with people I've met at conferences and I hope that you will be able to do the same through this conference. Outside of MUN, some of my hobbies and interests include watching movies, doing kendo, playing the piano and guitar, singing, and talking to my close friends. At this Cerritos Novice Conference, I encourage all of you to show your strengths and understand your weaknesses to learn and grow from this conference. Using what you've researched and prepared, be ready to display everything you know during committee. All in all, I wish you all the best of luck, and I am looking forward to seeing you all in committee!

Sincerely,

Jayden Kim

Director, UNICEF

Committee Introduction:

UNICEF, or the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, was established in December 1946 by the United Nations to advocate for the protection of children's rights and to help meet basic needs to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is committed to ensuring protection for children who are victims of war, disasters, poverty, and all forms of violence and exploitation, and has aided children in conflict regions and emergency circumstances. UNICEF supports the Convention of the Rights of the Child to ensure equality for those under discrimination and has promoted education for young women in developing countries, along with emergency healthcare to child refugees. UNICEF is working in 192 countries through country programs and National Committees.

Background:

According to Child Soldier International, child soldiers are children under the age of 18 who are used for military purposes. Children are forced to commit acts of violence and are used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, informants, spies, or sex slaves. 40% of international armed forces consist of child soldiers²¹.

International armed forces recruit children because they are easier to manipulate into service. Although there is no definite basis for the use of child soldiers, an estimated 300,000 children have joined military organizations to escape poverty, gain protection, or accommodate for lack of education or loss of family. According to the Human Rights Watch, over 120,000 children are used as soldiers across Africa. Nearly 50% of the African population is in conflict or are post-conflict zones, which consist of children at risk of recruitment. In regions such as Colombia, Africa, and South-East Asia, children are kidnapped from schools, markets, and homes, forced to join military groups or killed if they resist¹². The Lord's Resistance Army, for example, has kidnapped over 10,000 children for fifteen years. In the last ten years, nearly two million children have died from recruitment or attempted recruitment, and over five million children have been permanently disabled due to conflict. In Myanmar, over 70,000 boys as young as 11 years of age are forced into the military under threat of death or incarceration. Children are psychologically more vulnerable than adults, so they are more likely to be convinced to join armed groups¹⁴. Children, under drugs (marijuana, cocaine, cane juice, and gunpowder) and brainwashing (by spreading fear of escape and promising future wealth and political prosperity) are cheaper and easier to control than trained soldiers because they are "expendable and replaceable"⁹. Children are often recruited by government armed forces as a natural outcome of regional instability. Some children volunteer to join the armed forces, but tens of thousands of children are forced to join, often at gunpoint. Children who refuse to fulfill their duties are punished with severe beatings or threatened with execution. Many of them currently face violence, displacement, hunger, and exploitation by armed forces. Children who live in areas of conflict are more likely to join military organizations. Since 2014, there have been over forty armed conflicts, and many post-conflict societies are likely to return to a period of conflict, a lack of resources, government intervention, and economic opportunities to stabilize the regions. Countries such as Libya, Iran, and Yemen have had recurring civil wars due to regional instability, leading to the increased recruitment of child soldiers⁶.

Child soldiers who are forced into conflict experience harsh treatment such as abuse and sexual exploitation. To perform tasks effectively, drugs and tranquilizers are used on children, which can create mental and physical health issues. Recruitment of child soldiers under threat of death or incarceration creates damage to children's health, leading to PTSD, depression, or anxiety. Survivors in post-conflict areas are traumatized from torture and war violence. When conflicts end, child soldiers must be demobilized and reintegrated into society¹⁶. Children who are no longer in armed groups are rarely welcomed back into society or towns. If they are able to return to society, they are unable to assimilate back into their society and culture because of the psychological, emotional, and physical pain associated with their military experiences.

United Nations Involvement:

The United Nations has worked with UNICEF to prevent further recruitment of child soldiers. In 2000, the First Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) was drafted, which states the legal age for military participation to be increased from the age of 15 to 18 to prevent unjust treatment of children in armed forces. Voluntary recruitment by state military forces begins at the age of 16 as long as they are not forced to participate in combat. OPAC was adopted by the General Assembly in May 2000 implemented in 2002 and is currently signed by 168 countries. 17 countries have not signed or ratified the protocol while 12 countries have signed but have not yet ratified. Organization coalitions such as the Child Soldiers International currently campaign for the universal ratification of OPAC and encourages the United Nations bodies to adopt OPAC₂₆.

In 1990, the United Nations approved the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes 54 articles that define human rights for children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines the international standard recognizing the needs of children and states that all state parties must abide by the rules of “international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child”, which has been signed and ratified by 195 countries. The Committee on the Rights of the Child was thus created to supervise the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and OPAC. On May 2010, the UN Secretary-General launched the Global Campaign for the Universal Ratification and Implementation of the Optional Protocols to the CRC, which aimed to achieve the universal ratification on the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (OPSC)₈.

The Security Council adopted Resolution 2068 in 2012 to impose sanctions on military forces that have abused the rights of children in armed conflicts such as forced recruitment, abduction from hospitals and schools, and sexual abuse. To combat abduction, UNICEF utilizes education through programs with as transit camps and bridge courses, RapidED, and Accelerated Learning Programs and encourages governments to educate the citizens of threats of abductions, which is a violation of international law, and to take necessary measures to ensure the safety of children in conflict zones₂₃.

Bloc Positions:

Western Bloc: Countries in the Western bloc have taken necessary measures and approaches to guide other countries to fight against the use of child soldiers. Canada, the United States, and the European Union have provided donations of monetary support to demobilize child soldiers and effectively reintegrate them into society. The United States passed the Child Soldier Prevention Act in 2008, which criminalizes the recruitment of child soldiers in armed forces.

Latin America and the Caribbean Bloc: Countries in the Latin American and Caribbean bloc have used child soldiers due to drug wars and coup d'états against governments. Countries involved in drug wars such as Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico have organized children into gangs

and fighters for the benefit of drug cartels. This bloc should research solutions that can prohibit the use of children in drug war affairs in Latin America.

African Bloc: African countries currently have the highest recruitment rate of child soldiers because of prolonged conflict. To protect the rights of the child, African countries have created the 1999 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to educate societies on human rights. In 2011, the African Union has located the Lord's Resistance Army, which has kidnapped and killed over 30,000 children under the orders of Joseph Kony. In Africa, the highest rates of use of child soldiers are in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Uganda, who use violent measures to control child soldiers. This bloc should address conflicts in African countries to ensure the protection of children against recruitment into military organizations.

Asian-Pacific Bloc: Asian countries have a significant number of child soldiers, directly under Africa's child recruitment rate. Countries such as Sri Lanka (7,000 children), Myanmar (50,000 children), and India (3,000 children) have some of the largest populations of child soldiers in Asia. Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal have signed the First Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, with Myanmar being the exception. Countries in this bloc should research alternatives to using child soldiers.

Basic Solutions:

Children are being recruited by armed groups and government militaries. To address this issue of child soldiers, delegates should propose solutions that cover various topics of child soldiers, ranging from demobilization to social reintegration. Proposing resolutions between countries of differing policies is critical because, with continuous conflict, there is increased demand for child soldiers in countries that lack trained militia personnel. Delegates should attempt to dialogue between opposing parties with a third party so that both parties will propose goals that can be achieved together.

Poverty is one of the leading causes of the recruitment of child soldiers, so proposing solutions to reduce poverty through economic stability of countries is encouraged. Many international governmental and nongovernmental organizations are able to aid developing countries in training children and citizens to receive vocational training to be able to work and circulate the economy. Agriculture and industrial manufacturing are the two greatest sources of income, so delegates should focus on farming and industrial education to stabilize the economies of developing nations.

Education is also one of the factors of children joining armed forces. Children are deprived of education when they do not have familial and financial support. Because of their inability to receive basic education, they become brainwashed and join militia groups to receive food and shelter. Educational opportunities for children through organizations in local communities within developing countries should be proposed so that children can learn the necessary information to stray away from militia groups.

Delegates should also take into consideration the need for rehabilitating child soldiers when they are demobilized. Children who have experienced combat under armed forces carry the burden of psychological trauma and physical disabilities, so rehabilitation is necessary to

effectively reintegrate child soldiers into society. Demobilized and reintegrated soldiers should be given basic education and jobs to support themselves due to their lack of basic education and skill sets crucial for jobs.

Questions to Consider:

- 1) How has your country been affected by child soldiers? What has your country done to effectively aid child soldiers both within your own country and internationally?
- 2) How should child soldiers and demobilized soldiers be reintegrated into society?
- 3) Why is education crucial to the issue of child soldiers? How does education prevent the recruitment of child soldiers?
- 4) How is poverty a leading issue of child recruitment into armed forces? How would your country contribute to stabilizing the economies of developing countries?
- 5) How is your country able to aid in the prevention of recruitment of child soldiers in armed forces?

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