



General Assembly First

Disarmament and International Security Committee

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Letter from the Secretariat

Delegates,

Welcome to the background guides for MiniMUN 2019! Whether it is your first or third Model United Nations conference, it is our hope at MiniMUN that you will continue to further expand your knowledge of MUN, world issues, and the UN itself.

The purpose of this background guide is to introduce the committee and the topic, as well as help you write your position paper. Details on position paper and submission are available under the Position Paper tab on our website:

<http://chsmiminun.weebly.com/position-papers.html>

The topics and committees were chosen to reflect the problems that our world leaders face. As a delegate, you will be stepping into the role of world leaders. You will take on perspectives different from your own, and you will push for what your country believes to be right.

We have diligently worked to make this year's topics even more captivating and advanced than previous years. If at any time, you are having trouble understanding the background guide, finding information on the topic, or writing your position paper, please contact your chairs for help. They are more than willing to assist you to make MiniMUN a productive and engaging conference!

We are very excited to see you at MiniMUN 2019!

Christine Pang and Curran Myers

Secretary-General and Director-General, MiniMUN 2019



Description of Committee

The Disarmament and International Security Committee is the First Committee of the UN General Assemblies. Its main focuses are on disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community, as well as to seek out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime. Established in 1946, it plays a critical role in maintaining local and international peace.

Noteworthy topics discussed by the Disarmament and International Security Committee include nuclear proliferation in the middle east, the role of science and technology in international security, and of course, the demilitarization of the Arctic, and the flow of firearms in the Middle East. Every year, all 193 member states are welcome to attend and debate during the four to five week period after the UN General Assembly General Debate.

The Disarmament and International Security Committee, like all general assemblies, have their sessions structured into three distinct stages: general debate, thematic discussion, and action on drafts. Therefore, we strongly encourage our delegates to model committee sessions similarly, to ensure a comprehensive and organized conference.

DISEC: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/first/>

Identifying and Ending the Use of Child Soldiers

Introduction

The use of child soldiers in many countries has caused an outcry in the international community for years. Historically, we see child soldiers active in developing nations with severely unstable political, economical, and social environments. While child soldiers have always been a haunting issue, they came to the front of humanitarian efforts in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. During this period, the world bore witness to the collapse of several regimes, the rise of militant dictators, and a mess of corrupt economies. The African continent plays host to the largest violations of child soldiers both in international and internal tribal conflicts. However, it is important to understand that child soldiers are a global crisis and not simply confined to the African context.

Before examining the use of child soldiers, we must first understand the problems of defining what a child soldier is. The Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 defines children as all “humans being under the age of 18, unless the relevant national laws recognize an earlier age of majority”. However, due to national laws that conflict, this leaves a grey area for children between ages 15 to 18. In terms of conflict, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers defines child soldiers as: any person below the age of 18 who is a member of or attached to government armed forces or any other regular or irregular armed force or armed political group, whether or not an armed conflict exists. Child soldiers perform a range of tasks including: participation in combat; laying mines and explosives; scouting, spying, acting as decoys, couriers or guards; training, drill or other preparations; logistics and support functions, portering, cooking and domestic labour. Child soldiers may also be subjected to sexual slavery or other forms of sexual abuse.

Additionally, the African Union took a strong stance in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in establishing a majority age of 18 and ensuring that no person under the age can be involved in violence. However, this 1990 charter has not received full recognition from all African nations. When addressing the issue of child soldiers, one must understand why militaries recruit children in the first place. Using children in war often confuses an opposing army whose adult soldiers will generally hesitate when firing upon children. Children also invoke a strong element of surprise when infiltrating enemy grounds. Another reason for recruiting children relies on attempts of the regime to create a following. If leaders want long-term support, it then makes political sense to mold the minds into fervent supporters of some cause. In many countries, particularly within Africa, there are many homeless children that can easily be recruited with the promise of food and shelter. Because of their numbers and long-term potential, children become a dispensable commodity to militants. Additionally, children are psychologically less risk-averse than adults, who understand their mortality. The typical child will be less aware of associated risks and will therefore obey with less apprehension. The future problem turns towards how these children will be once the conflict subsides.

In response to these conditions, the United Nations issued several condemnations and organized watch bodies to monitor child soldier and trafficking conditions. One of the biggest strides in international law against the use of child soldiers was the UN Security Council Resolution 1612, ratified in 2005. This resolution reaffirms and “strongly condemns the recruitment and use of child soldiers by parties to armed conflict in violation of international obligations applicable to them and all other violations and abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict” (S/RES/1612).

Current Situation

Today, Human Rights Watch and other humanitarian organizations estimate between 200,000 – 300,000 children under the age of 18 currently involved in armed conflicts

across the globe. These conflicts may involve government armed forces, paramilitary groups, or armed opposition groups. The International Criminal Court (ICC) established jurisdiction over instances of child enlisting by defining such an action as a war crime. Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the ICC includes “conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities”. A combination of international efforts has successfully punished individuals caught performing such actions; however, the act of catching the individuals in charge is still a major challenge today.

Child soldiers today face several social, medical, and economic problems. Many child refugees and escaped soldiers developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in response to the brutalities they are forced to witness. The ongoing process of repatriating and rehabilitating child soldiers in itself requires tremendous resources, often being nearly impossible for victims to recover from completely. Additionally, child soldiers are deprived of several rights advocated within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Because of the economic situations, children lack education, live in extreme poverty, and depend on their captors for food and survival. Life expectancy for child soldiers is abysmal due to underdevelopment and severe health risks. Understandably, these are terrible conditions for children who are often forced and brainwashed into the militant group.

Past UN Action

While the Security Council and other international organizations have defined rules, interpreted law, and described punishments, these efforts are still not enough. As a committee of the General Assembly, the First Committee on Disarmament and International Security has a larger membership that may be able to reach a broader consensus on the question at hand.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can the UN focus efforts on preventing the use of child soldiers?
2. Can the UN do anything about non-governmental actors and rebellious regimes that utilize force child labour?
3. Why are child soldiers mostly found in unstable, developing nations?
4. How can the UN and other humanitarian organizations better monitor the use of child soldiers?
5. What efforts has your state taken to ensure the safety of children?