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United Nations General Assembly Third Committee
(SOCHUM)

Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children

CONTENTS

Letter from the Executive Board	4
MUN Rules Of Procedure (ROP)	5
1. Roll Call	5
2. Setting the Agenda	5
3. Speakers' List	5
4. Points	5
5. Motions	6
6. Yields	6
7. Caucuses	6
8. Draft Resolutions and Amendments	6
9. Voting	7
Introduction to the Committee	7
Introduction to the Agenda	8
Historical Background	9
International Legal Framework	10
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	10
Optional Protocols to the CRC	11
International Labour Organization Conventions	11
Other Relevant International Instruments	12
Sustainable Development Goals	12
Contemporary Challenges	12
Poverty and Inequality	13
Armed Conflict and Humanitarian Crises	13
Child Labour and Exploitation	13

Access to Education and Healthcare	13
The Digital World	14
Climate Change	14
Role of the United Nations and Other International Organizations	14
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	15
Committee on the Rights of the Child	15
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)	15
International Labour Organization (ILO)	15
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	16
Other International Partners	16
Regional Perspectives	16
Africa	17
Asia-Pacific	17
Europe	17
Latin America and the Caribbean	17
Middle East and North Africa	18
Small Island Developing States (SIDS)	18
Key Issues for Discussion	18
Ensuring Equal Access to Education	18
Eliminating Child Labour and Exploitation	19
Protecting Children During Armed Conflicts and Emergencies	19
Creating a Safer Digital Environment	19
Strengthening International Cooperation	19
Questions a Resolution Should Address	20
References	20

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee (SOCHUM). We are delighted to have you participate in discussions on the agenda, **"Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children."** This committee offers a platform to engage in meaningful diplomacy, critical analysis, and collaborative policymaking on one of the most significant human rights issues before the international community.

Children are among the most vulnerable members of society, and despite considerable progress in advancing their rights, millions continue to face challenges such as poverty, armed conflict, trafficking, child labour, discrimination, inadequate access to education and healthcare, and the growing risks posed by the digital world and climate change. Addressing these issues requires sustained international cooperation and effective implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks.

As delegates, you are encouraged to examine the issue from the perspective of your assigned Member State, taking into account its national policies, international commitments, and regional priorities. Successful diplomacy in SOCHUM demands informed debate, constructive negotiation, and the ability to develop practical, consensus-based solutions that uphold the rights and well-being of children while respecting the diversity of national contexts.

This background guide is intended to provide a foundation for your research by outlining the historical evolution of children's rights, the relevant international legal framework, and the key challenges shaping contemporary discussions. We encourage you to supplement this guide with further research using official United Nations documents and other credible sources.

We wish you the very best in your preparation and look forward to witnessing engaging debates, thoughtful negotiations, and innovative solutions throughout the conference.

Sincerely,

The Executive Board

United Nations General Assembly Third Committee (SOCHUM)

MUN Rules Of Procedure (ROP)

1. Roll Call

- The Chair calls on each country to declare if they are "Present" or "Present and Voting." It refers to the voting procedure on the Draft Resolution, where a delegate can vote "Yes", "No", or opt to "Abstain".
- If "Present and Voting," the delegate cannot abstain from voting. If the delegate chooses to respond with "Present", they may answer with "Present and Voting" on subsequent days, but this is not permissible for "Present and Voting" as this reply must be used consistently from that point forth.

2. Setting the Agenda

- Delegates motion to set the agenda, followed by a formal debate on which topic to discuss first. This motion requires a simple majority to pass.

3. Speakers' List

- After passing a motion to enter formal debate, delegates are placed on a speakers' list to make formal speeches. Time limits are set, and the Chair calls on delegates to speak in order.
- A delegate must raise their placard if they wish to add their name to this list. They can be on this list only once on any occasion.

4. Points

- **Point of Order:** To correct a procedural error by the Chair.
- **Point of Personal Privilege:** For personal discomfort (e.g., if the room is too cold, or if a fellow delegate cannot be heard).
- **Point of Inquiry:** To ask questions about discussion or statements in committee.
- **Point of Parliamentary Inquiry:** To ask questions with regard to the Rules of Procedure.

5. Motions

- **Motion to Suspend the Meeting:** To break for caucuses or adjourn the session.
- **Motion to Close Debate:** Ends the discussion on a topic and moves to voting. Requires a two-thirds majority.
- **Motion to Table the Topic:** Postpones debate on a topic. Requires a majority vote.

6. Yields

- **Yield to the Executive Board:** A delegate yields their remaining time from their speech to the Executive Board. It is to be used as they see fit.
- **Yield to Another Delegate:** A delegate yields their remaining time for another delegate to speak. (This delegate's permission must be sought beforehand)
- **Yield to Points of Information:** A delegate yields their remaining time to Points of Information to the committee.
- **Yield to Comments:** A delegate yields their remaining time to comments from the committee.

7. Caucuses

- **Moderated Caucus:** The Chair controls the speaking order with shorter, focused speeches. The topic selected is a narrowed version of the agenda, chosen by the delegate who proposed the moderated caucus.
- **Unmoderated Caucus:** Informal discussion among delegates not under the moderation of the Executive Board.

8. Draft Resolutions and Amendments

- Delegates collaborate to create draft resolutions, which are formal solutions to the discussed issue.
- **Friendly Amendments:** Accepted by all sponsors without a vote.
- **Unfriendly Amendments:** Need to be voted on to be added.

9. Voting

- **Procedural Votes:** Includes motions and amendments; all members must vote.
- **Substantive Votes:** For resolutions and unfriendly amendments; only "Present and Voting" delegates may vote, and abstentions are allowed.

Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations General Assembly Third Committee, more commonly known as the **Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)**, is one of the six Main Committees of the United Nations General Assembly. It serves as the primary forum where Member States come together to discuss issues that directly affect the lives, dignity, and rights of people across the world. From human rights and social development to humanitarian concerns and cultural issues, SOCHUM provides a platform for dialogue on some of the most pressing global challenges.

Every year, representatives from all 193 UN Member States participate in the Committee's sessions to debate a wide range of topics, including the rights of women and children, the protection of refugees, the elimination of discrimination, the rights of persons with disabilities, crime prevention, and humanitarian assistance. In carrying out its work, SOCHUM collaborates closely with UN bodies and specialized agencies such as United Nations Children's Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, whose expertise helps shape discussions and inform policy recommendations.

Unlike the United Nations Security Council, SOCHUM does not have the authority to make legally binding decisions. Instead, its strength lies in building international consensus. Through debate, negotiation, and cooperation, the Committee drafts resolutions that are submitted to the General Assembly for adoption. While these resolutions are not legally enforceable, they often influence national policies, contribute to the development of international norms, and guide the work of governments and UN agencies around the world.

The agenda before this committee, "**Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children,**" reflects SOCHUM's commitment to advancing human rights and social justice. It calls upon delegates to examine the challenges faced by children across different regions and to explore practical, inclusive, and internationally acceptable

solutions. As representatives of their respective Member States, delegates are encouraged to balance national priorities with the shared responsibility of ensuring that every child can grow up in an environment that is safe, healthy, and respectful of their rights.

Introduction to the Agenda

Children are at the heart of every society. They represent not only the future of nations but also some of the most vulnerable members of the global community. Ensuring that every child has access to education, healthcare, protection from violence and exploitation, and opportunities to grow in a safe and supportive environment is fundamental to achieving sustainable development, peace, and social progress.

Over the past few decades, the international community has made significant strides in advancing children's rights. The near-universal acceptance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has established a common global standard for the protection and well-being of children, while governments and international organizations have implemented numerous policies and programmes aimed at improving their lives. As a result, millions of children have gained better access to education, healthcare, and legal protections.

Despite this progress, serious challenges continue to persist. Across the world, millions of children remain affected by poverty, armed conflict, forced displacement, trafficking, child labour, child marriage, malnutrition, and limited access to quality education and healthcare. Emerging issues such as online exploitation, cyberbullying, artificial intelligence, and the growing impact of climate change have further complicated efforts to safeguard children's rights, creating risks that were largely unimaginable just a few decades ago.

Protecting children's rights is not solely a humanitarian responsibility—it is also a legal and developmental imperative. The well-being of children is closely linked to broader global objectives, including reducing poverty, promoting gender equality, improving public health, and fostering peaceful and inclusive societies. Investments in children today have long-term social and economic benefits that extend well beyond national borders.

The agenda, therefore, invites delegates to examine both longstanding and emerging challenges through the lens of international cooperation. Delegates must

consider how existing international legal frameworks can be strengthened, how governments can better implement their commitments, and how the international community can work together to ensure that every child, regardless of nationality, gender, disability, or socio-economic background, is able to enjoy their fundamental rights. The objective of this committee is not only to identify problems but also to develop practical, balanced, and forward-looking solutions that reflect the diverse realities of Member States while upholding the universal principles of human rights.

Historical Background

The recognition of children's rights has evolved significantly over the past century. For much of history, children were largely viewed as dependents under the care and authority of their families, with few legal protections specifically tailored to their needs. While societies acknowledged the importance of protecting children, there was little international consensus on their rights or the responsibilities of States towards them.

The first major international effort to recognise children's rights came in 1924 with the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the League of Nations. Drafted in the aftermath of the First World War, the Declaration affirmed that children are entitled to special care, protection, and opportunities for healthy development. Although brief and non-binding, it laid the foundation for future international action by acknowledging that children require protections beyond those afforded to adults.

Following the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, the protection of human rights became a central objective of the international community. The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognised that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, while also acknowledging that motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. However, it soon became evident that children faced unique challenges that required dedicated legal recognition.

In response, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which expanded upon the principles of the 1924 Declaration by setting out ten guiding principles focused on children's welfare, education, healthcare, protection, and development. Although it was not legally binding, the Declaration reinforced the growing international consensus that children should be recognised as rights holders rather than merely passive recipients of care.

The growing global focus on children's welfare culminated in the observance of the International Year of the Child, which highlighted issues such as child survival, nutrition, education, and protection from exploitation. The discussions and initiatives launched during this period ultimately paved the way for the negotiation of a comprehensive international treaty dedicated exclusively to children's rights.

These efforts resulted in the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. Entering into force in 1990, the Convention transformed the way children were viewed under international law. Rather than treating children solely as vulnerable individuals in need of protection, it recognised them as independent rights holders entitled to civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Today, the Convention remains the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world and serves as the cornerstone of the international framework for promoting and protecting the rights of children.

Since the adoption of the Convention, the international community has continued to strengthen children's rights through additional treaties, optional protocols, and global initiatives addressing issues such as child labour, trafficking, the recruitment of child soldiers, online exploitation, and access to education. While substantial progress has been made over the past three decades, persistent inequalities, armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, and emerging technological challenges demonstrate that the promotion and protection of children's rights remains an evolving and ongoing global priority.

International Legal Framework

The protection of children's rights is supported by a comprehensive body of international law that establishes the obligations of States and provides a framework for safeguarding the well-being, development, and dignity of every child. Over the years, the international community has adopted several treaties and conventions that collectively seek to ensure that children are protected from abuse, exploitation, discrimination, and neglect while enabling them to realise their full potential.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the cornerstone of international children's rights law. Entering into force in 1990, it is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world. The Convention defines a child as every human being below the age of eighteen, unless

majority is attained earlier under national law, and recognises children as independent rights holders rather than merely passive recipients of protection.

The Convention is guided by four fundamental principles: **non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival, and development**, and **respect for the views of the child**. Together, these principles underpin every provision of the Convention and guide States in developing laws and policies concerning children.

The CRC guarantees a broad range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, including the rights to education, healthcare, identity, family life, protection from violence and exploitation, and participation in decisions affecting the child. States Parties are required to adopt legislative, administrative, and policy measures to progressively realise these rights and periodically report on their implementation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Optional Protocols to the CRC

To strengthen the Convention, three Optional Protocols have been adopted. The first addresses the involvement of children in armed conflict by raising standards regarding the recruitment and participation of children in hostilities. The second focuses on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, requiring States to criminalise such practices and enhance international cooperation to combat them. The third Optional Protocol establishes an individual communications procedure, allowing children or their representatives to submit complaints alleging violations of their rights after domestic remedies have been exhausted.

International Labour Organization Conventions

The elimination of child labour is supported by key instruments adopted under the International Labour Organization. ILO Convention No. 138 establishes minimum age requirements for employment, while ILO Convention No. 182 calls for the immediate elimination of practices such as slavery, trafficking, forced labour, the recruitment of child soldiers, and hazardous forms of work. These conventions have played a crucial role in shaping national labour laws and reducing exploitative child labour worldwide.

Other Relevant International Instruments

Children's rights are also reinforced through broader international human rights treaties. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the inherent dignity and equal rights of all individuals while recognising that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guarantee rights that are equally applicable to children, including access to education, healthcare, freedom from discrimination, and protection under the law.

Other important instruments include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which addresses issues such as discrimination against girls and child marriage, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which safeguards the rights of children with disabilities, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, which strengthens international efforts to combat trafficking, including child trafficking.

Sustainable Development Goals

Although not legally binding, the United Nations's **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** has further strengthened the global commitment to children's rights. Several of the Sustainable Development Goals directly relate to children's well-being, including quality education, good health, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, reduced inequalities, and the elimination of child labour, child marriage, and all forms of violence against children. These goals encourage governments to integrate children's rights into broader national development strategies while promoting international cooperation and accountability.

Together, these legal instruments form the foundation of the international framework for promoting and protecting the rights of children. While they establish clear standards and obligations for States, their effectiveness ultimately depends on political will, adequate resources, strong institutions, and meaningful implementation at the national level.

Contemporary Challenges

Although the international community has made significant progress in recognising and protecting children's rights, many children around the world continue to face serious challenges that prevent them from living safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

While these issues differ from one country to another, they are often interconnected. Poverty, conflict, inequality, and weak institutions frequently make children more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and neglect. At the same time, new challenges such as climate change and the rapid growth of digital technologies have created risks that require fresh approaches and stronger international cooperation.

Poverty and Inequality

Poverty continues to be one of the biggest obstacles to protecting children's rights. Many children living in poverty struggle to access nutritious food, quality education, healthcare, and safe housing. Financial hardship can also force children into labour or increase their risk of early marriage, trafficking, or other forms of exploitation. Breaking this cycle requires not only economic development but also policies that ensure children and their families have access to basic services and social support.

Armed Conflict and Humanitarian Crises

Children are often the most affected during wars, conflicts, and humanitarian emergencies. Many are forced to flee their homes, lose access to education and healthcare, or become separated from their families. In some situations, children are recruited by armed groups or exposed to violence and exploitation. Even after conflicts end, rebuilding schools, healthcare systems, and child protection services can take years, leaving lasting effects on an entire generation.

Child Labour and Exploitation

Despite global efforts to reduce child labour, millions of children continue to work in farms, factories, mines, homes, and other hazardous environments. Many work because their families depend on the additional income, while others are denied access to education altogether. Children are also vulnerable to trafficking, forced labour, sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse. Tackling these problems requires stronger law enforcement, better educational opportunities, and measures that address the root causes of exploitation.

Access to Education and Healthcare

Education and healthcare are essential for every child's growth and development, yet they remain out of reach for many. Poverty, conflict, discrimination, disability, and displacement continue to prevent millions of children from attending school or receiving adequate medical care. While many countries have made remarkable

progress in expanding access to these services, significant gaps remain, particularly in low-income and conflict-affected regions.

The Digital World

Technology has transformed the lives of children in many positive ways by improving access to education, information, and communication. However, the internet also exposes children to new dangers, including cyberbullying, online exploitation, misinformation, and privacy risks. The rise of artificial intelligence and digital platforms has made it even more important for governments and technology companies to create safer online spaces while ensuring that children continue to benefit from digital innovation.

Climate Change

Climate change is increasingly affecting children's lives in ways that go beyond environmental concerns. Floods, droughts, heatwaves, and other extreme weather events disrupt schools, damage healthcare facilities, reduce access to clean water, and force families to leave their homes. Children are often among the first to experience the long-term effects of these disasters, making climate resilience an important part of protecting children's rights.

These challenges show that protecting children's rights is about much more than adopting international treaties. It requires governments, international organizations, civil society, communities, and families to work together to create environments where every child can grow, learn, and thrive. As delegates in SOCHUM, the task is not only to understand these challenges but also to identify practical and cooperative solutions that can be implemented across different national and regional contexts.

Role of the United Nations and Other International Organizations

Protecting the rights of children is a shared responsibility that extends beyond national governments. Over the years, the United Nations and several international organizations have developed programmes, monitoring mechanisms, and legal frameworks to support countries in fulfilling their commitments to children's rights. While each organization has a distinct mandate, their efforts often complement one

another through partnerships, humanitarian assistance, research, and policy development.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Children's Fund is the leading UN agency dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of children. Established in 1946, UNICEF works in more than 190 countries and territories to improve children's access to education, healthcare, nutrition, clean water, sanitation, and protection services. The organization also plays a critical role during humanitarian emergencies by providing life-saving assistance to children affected by conflicts, natural disasters, and disease outbreaks. Beyond emergency response, UNICEF works closely with governments to strengthen child protection systems and support long-term development.

Committee on the Rights of the Child

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is a body of independent experts responsible for monitoring how States implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Countries that have ratified the Convention are required to submit periodic reports outlining the steps they have taken to protect children's rights. The Committee reviews these reports, engages in dialogue with governments, and issues recommendations to help improve national policies and practices.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights works to promote and protect human rights worldwide, including the rights of children. It supports governments in implementing international human rights obligations, monitors violations, provides technical assistance, and raises awareness of issues affecting vulnerable groups. OHCHR also works with other UN agencies to ensure that children's rights remain a central part of the global human rights agenda.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Child labour remains a major concern in many parts of the world, making the work of the International Labour Organization particularly important. Through international labour standards and cooperation with governments, employers, and workers' organizations, the ILO seeks to eliminate child labour, especially its worst forms. It

also supports policies that expand access to education and create decent employment opportunities for adults, reducing the economic pressures that often push children into work.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Millions of children today are refugees, asylum seekers, or internally displaced due to conflict and persecution. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees works to ensure that displaced children have access to shelter, education, healthcare, legal protection, and family reunification whenever possible. The agency also helps governments develop systems that better protect refugee and displaced children from exploitation and abuse.

Other International Partners

A number of other organizations also contribute to the protection of children's rights. The World Health Organization supports child health and vaccination programmes, while the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization works to improve access to quality education. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime assists countries in combating child trafficking, online exploitation, and other forms of organised crime affecting children. Alongside these institutions, governments, non-governmental organizations, community groups, and civil society organizations play an equally important role in ensuring that children's rights are protected at the local, national, and international levels.

No single organization can address every challenge faced by children. Meaningful progress depends on cooperation between governments, international organizations, civil society, and local communities. As delegates in SOCHUM, understanding the role of these stakeholders is essential for developing practical resolutions that build on existing international efforts while encouraging greater collaboration among Member States.

Regional Perspectives

While the rights of children are universally recognized, the challenges faced by children often differ from one region to another. Factors such as economic development, political stability, cultural practices, and environmental conditions shape how countries approach child protection. Understanding these regional

differences helps delegates appreciate the diversity of perspectives that will emerge during committee discussions.

Africa

Many African countries have made significant progress in expanding access to education, healthcare, and child protection services. However, poverty, food insecurity, armed conflicts, and displacement continue to affect millions of children across the continent. In several regions, children remain vulnerable to child labour, child marriage, recruitment by armed groups, and limited access to quality education and healthcare. Strengthening institutions and improving access to basic services remain key priorities.

Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region is home to more than half of the world's children and presents a wide range of realities. While many countries have achieved remarkable improvements in education and healthcare, others continue to face challenges such as child labour, human trafficking, child marriage, malnutrition, and unequal access to opportunities. Rapid urbanisation and technological growth have also brought greater attention to issues such as online safety, digital literacy, and the protection of children's privacy.

Europe

Most European countries have well-developed legal and social protection systems for children. Current discussions in the region often focus on issues such as children's mental health, online safety, cyberbullying, migration, and the integration of refugee children. Many governments are also working to ensure that children are protected from online exploitation while maintaining access to digital technologies and education.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Countries across Latin America and the Caribbean have strengthened legal protections for children over the past few decades. However, violence, organised crime, poverty, and migration continue to affect many communities. Children in some areas face risks such as trafficking, gang recruitment, and limited access to education and social services. Governments and regional organizations continue to work towards improving child protection systems and reducing inequalities.

Middle East and North Africa

Several countries in the Middle East and North Africa have experienced prolonged conflicts and humanitarian crises, which have had severe consequences for children. Displacement, interrupted education, food insecurity, and limited healthcare remain major concerns in conflict-affected areas. At the same time, many countries in the region have introduced reforms aimed at improving children's access to education, healthcare, and legal protection.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

For many Small Island Developing States, climate change poses one of the greatest threats to children's well-being. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and natural disasters can disrupt education, healthcare, and livelihoods, placing additional pressure on already limited resources. Building resilient infrastructure and ensuring that children remain protected during environmental emergencies have become important regional priorities.

Although these regional perspectives highlight common trends, no two countries face exactly the same circumstances. Each Member State has its own legal system, economic capacity, and social priorities. Delegates should therefore research their assigned country's specific policies, challenges, and international commitments to develop positions that accurately reflect its national perspective while contributing to meaningful international cooperation.

Key Issues for Discussion

While the international community has made significant progress in protecting children's rights, many challenges still remain. Every country faces these issues in different ways, and there is no single solution that works for everyone. As delegates, your role is to understand these challenges, consider your country's position, and work with other Member States to develop practical and achievable solutions.

Some of the key issues that delegates should consider include:

Ensuring Equal Access to Education

Education is one of the most important rights of every child. However, millions of children around the world still do not attend school due to poverty, conflict,

discrimination, disability, or displacement. Delegates should explore ways to improve access to quality education while ensuring that no child is left behind.

Eliminating Child Labour and Exploitation

Although international efforts have reduced child labour over the years, many children continue to work in unsafe conditions or become victims of trafficking, forced labour, and other forms of exploitation. Delegates should discuss how governments can strengthen laws, improve enforcement, and address the social and economic conditions that lead to child labour.

Protecting Children During Armed Conflicts and Emergencies

Wars, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises often disrupt children's lives the most. Many lose access to education, healthcare, and safe shelter, while others become refugees or are separated from their families. Delegates should consider how the international community can better protect children before, during, and after emergencies.

Creating a Safer Digital Environment

As more children use the internet for education and communication, online safety has become increasingly important. Cyberbullying, online exploitation, misinformation, and privacy concerns are growing challenges. Delegates should discuss how governments, international organizations, and technology companies can work together to make the digital world safer for children while preserving access to technology.

Strengthening International Cooperation

Protecting children's rights is a shared responsibility. While governments play the leading role, international organizations, civil society, and local communities also contribute through funding, technical assistance, humanitarian aid, and policy support. Delegates should think about how countries can cooperate more effectively, share best practices, and support one another in implementing international commitments.

The objective of this committee is not only to identify these challenges but also to propose realistic and collaborative solutions. Successful resolutions should be

practical, respect the different capacities of Member States, and promote the long-term well-being, safety, and development of children across the world.

Questions a Resolution Should Address

1. How can Member States ensure equal access to quality education and healthcare for every child?
2. What measures can be adopted to eliminate child labour, child trafficking, and other forms of child exploitation?
3. How can the international community better protect children affected by armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, and natural disasters?
4. What steps can governments take to create a safer digital environment for children while promoting responsible use of technology?
5. How can countries strengthen national child protection systems and improve the implementation of existing international legal frameworks?
6. What role should the United Nations, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector play in promoting and protecting the rights of children?
7. How can Member States provide greater support to vulnerable groups, including refugee children, children with disabilities, and those living in poverty?
8. What forms of international cooperation can be strengthened to promote the protection and well-being of children worldwide?

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