

PODAR SUMMIT 2026 |
MENS OMNIA VINCIT

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN
RIGHTS COUNCIL

STUDY GUIDE



AGENDA:

DELIBERATING UPON VIOLATIONS OF WOMEN'S
AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN AREAS AFFECTED BY
ARMED CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	Page No.
Letter from Executive Board	2
History of the Agenda	3
Previous Actions	12
The International Legal Framework, Past Resolutions and Treaties	18
Bibliography	31

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Letter from the Executive Board -

It's with great pleasure and excitement that we welcome delegates to the UNHRC Committee at PODAR SUMMIT - 2026. We look forward to spirited and passionate debate in committee, which ideally combines meticulous research, shrewd discourse and creative solutions. UNHRC is a contemporary and tricky concept in itself; as a committee you'll try to define this concept and find ways to expand the scope of what is possible through diplomacy, notably with the western bloc of nations absent. As delegates, you'll rise up to the task of representing your country and committing to solving issues currently plaguing our world.

Whether you're a seasoned MUN-ner or a first-timer, the challenges remain the same and the opportunities just as exciting. Make sure you're not just there to win, but to make the most of this time with your fellow delegates and gain a better understanding of the nuances of geopolitics. Ensure you listen as much as you speak, and learn as much as you preach. Importantly, respect those around you. This document is not exhaustive and is not a valid source of information, it is simply an attempt at compiling all the background information a delegate might require to research further. This guide will serve as a starting point for research. Solutions put forth in the final paperwork of the committee must be as original as they are creative. Also, a little tip: make sure you go through the references and official documents cited throughout the guide. They'll definitely come in handy. We chairs are eager to meet all of you and have a fantastic time.

Regards,
Executive Board

HISTORY OF THE AGENDA

✦ Conceptual Origins:

From Humanitarian Law to Human Rights Law

The protection of women and children in situations of armed conflict did not originate within the human rights architecture of the United Nations. Its earliest legal roots lie in international humanitarian law (IHL) — the body of law governing the conduct of hostilities — specifically in the Hague Regulations of 1899 and 1907 and, decisively, in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. The Fourth Geneva Convention, relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, was the first instrument to codify discrete protections for women (Article 27, against attacks on honour and against rape) and indirectly for children, treating them principally as members of the vulnerable civilian population rather than as rights-holders in their own right.

This humanitarian law framework was significantly extended by the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. Additional Protocol I (Articles 76–77) and Additional Protocol II (Article 4) introduced, for the first time in treaty law, an explicit prohibition on the recruitment and use of children under fifteen in hostilities, alongside special protections for women, particularly pregnant women and mothers of young children. The International Committee of the Red Cross has consistently emphasised that these IHL protections must operate in a complementary, mutually reinforcing manner with international human rights law during armed conflict, and that the gap visible today is not a deficiency of legal content but a crisis of compliance and enforcement.

Delegates should treat this distinction — between deficiency of law and deficiency of compliance — as a recurring theme throughout the agenda's history. Successive instruments did not, for the most part, invent new substantive obligations so much as progressively extend the categories of protected person, sharpen enforcement mechanisms, and create monitoring architecture. The legal core has therefore been comparatively stable since 1977; what has changed dramatically is the institutional apparatus built around it.

✦ The General Assembly Era (1968–1979)

Declaring Special Protection

The transition of this subject onto the United Nations' political and human-rights agenda proper began at the General Assembly.

HISTORY OF THE AGENDA

Between 1968 and 1970, the Assembly adopted a sequence of foundational resolutions — resolution 2444 (XXIII) of 1968 on respect for human rights in armed conflict, resolution 2597 (XXIV) of 1969, and resolutions 2674 (XXV) and 2675 (XXV) of 1970 on the basic principles for the protection of civilian populations in conflict. These resolutions established the normative bridge between the Geneva law tradition, which binds states as parties to treaties, and the emerging human-rights-based approach to conflict-affected populations, which frames protection as something owed to individuals as rights-holders.

This culminated in the General Assembly's adoption, on 14 December 1974, of the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (resolution 3318 (XXIX)). The Declaration was prompted by an Economic and Social Council request (resolution 1861 (LVI), 1974) that the Assembly consider drafting precisely such an instrument. It is a landmark text for several reasons: it was the first UN instrument devoted exclusively to women and children as a combined protected category in conflict; it explicitly invoked obligations under the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 1949 Geneva Conventions; and it directly linked the protection of civilians to anti-colonial and self-determination struggles, reflecting the political character of the General Assembly in the early 1970s, a period dominated by decolonisation.

Committee delegates should note a recurring drafting tension that begins here and persists throughout the agenda's history: the Declaration's text simultaneously frames women and children as passive, vulnerable subjects requiring protection (a protection paradigm) and gestures, in its preamble, toward the political contexts — colonialism, foreign domination, struggles for self-determination — in which their suffering occurs (a structural-causation paradigm). This tension between protection-as-shielding and protection-as-addressing-root-causes becomes a central conceptual axis of the entire agenda, and resurfaces explicitly in the 1995 Beijing Platform and in the Security Council's Women, Peace and Security framework discussed below.

♦ **The Machel Report and the Birth of an Institutional Mandate (1996–1997)**

If 1974 established the normative principle that women and children warrant distinct attention in armed conflict, it was the 1996 report of Graça Machel, former Minister of Education of Mozambique, that transformed this principle

HISTORY OF THE AGENDA

into sustained institutional machinery. Acting as the Secretary-General's appointed expert pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/157 (1993), Machel spent two years travelling to conflict-affected countries and meeting children, families, humanitarian workers, and government officials. Her report, *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, was presented to the General Assembly's Third Committee on 26 August 1996 and described conflicts in which, in her words, nothing had been 'spared, held sacred or protected — not children, families or communities.'

The Machel Report's most consequential recommendation was institutional rather than declaratory: the nomination of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, tasked with keeping the issue 'very high on the international human rights, peace, security and development agendas.' The General Assembly responded within four months, adopting resolution 51/77 in December 1996, which created the mandate of the Special Representative and established that the position would report annually to both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council (then still the Commission on Human Rights). One hundred and twenty-nine Member States co-sponsored the resulting child-rights resolution, which contained more than thirty-five new recommendations for action — the first UN text to systematically connect human rights and humanitarian concerns with the institutional practice of UN peacemaking and peacekeeping.

The Machel Report also had an unusually direct disciplinary effect within the UN system itself: its country studies documented that in six of twelve cases examined, the arrival of peacekeeping troops was associated with a rapid rise in child victims of prostitution, a finding that prompted an internal UN investigation into sexual exploitation of children by peacekeeping personnel. This is worth noting because it establishes, as early as 1996, the principle — still contested in some quarters — that international actors deployed to protect conflict-affected populations are themselves subject to scrutiny under this agenda, not merely external parties to conflict.

♦ **Codification of Children's Rights: The 1989 Convention and Its Optional Protocol**

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989 (resolution 44/25) represented the single

HISTORY OF THE AGENDA

most significant codification event in the history of this agenda. The CRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, and Article 38 obligates States Parties to respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to children in armed conflict, while Article 39 requires States to take measures to promote the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of armed conflict.

However, Article 38(3) of the CRC was, from the outset, regarded by child-rights advocates as a compromise rather than a triumph: it permitted the recruitment of children from the age of fifteen, mirroring the lower standard already present in the 1977 Additional Protocols rather than adopting a strict eighteen-year threshold. This dissatisfaction directly produced the next major instrument.

Negotiations toward an Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) were difficult and protracted, reflecting genuine divergence among states on military recruitment policy. In the final stages of negotiation, only five states — Egypt, Kuwait, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and most insistently the United States — continued to resist the so-called ‘straight-eighteen’ principle that no person under eighteen be recruited or used in hostilities under any circumstances. The compromise eventually reached, and adopted by the General Assembly on 25 May 2000 (resolution 54/263), raised the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities to eighteen as an absolute standard, while permitting voluntary recruitment from sixteen subject to strict safeguards (informed consent, parental consent, and proof of age), and categorically prohibiting non-state armed groups from recruiting or using any person under eighteen in any capacity. OPAC entered into force on 12 February 2002 and, by January 2023, had been ratified by 173 states, with March 2026 having marked the instrument's twenty-fifth anniversary, an occasion used by the Human Rights Council to convene its first Annual Day on the Rights of the Child dedicated specifically to children in armed conflict.

♦ **The Security Council Enters: The Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) Agenda, 1999–2018**

Parallel to the human-rights-treaty track, a distinct institutional track developed within the United Nations Security Council, treating grave violations against children as a matter of international peace and security rather than purely of

HISTORY OF THE AGENDA

human rights law. This began with the Security Council's adoption, in 1999, of resolution 1261 — the first Council resolution exclusively addressing children and armed conflict, which placed the issue formally on the Council's agenda and identified an initial set of grave violations affecting children in conflict.

The Security Council subsequently adopted a dedicated thematic resolution series, building incrementally toward an accountability architecture: resolution 1314 (2000) strengthened monitoring obligations; resolution 1379 (2001) requested that the Secretary-General begin listing parties that recruit or use children; resolution 1460 (2003) called for time-bound action plans with listed parties; and resolution 1539 (2004) refined the listing and delisting procedure. This culminated in resolution 1612 (2005), which the Security Council itself has described as an ‘unprecedented step’: the establishment of a formal Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), supported by a Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict comprising all fifteen Council members operating by consensus.

The MRM formalised what is informally termed a ‘naming and shaming’ process: the Secretary-General's annual report identifies, in dedicated annexes, parties to conflict — state and non-state alike — responsible for grave violations against children. Originally, only parties that recruit and use children could be listed; subsequent resolutions broadened the listing triggers considerably. Resolution 1882 (2009) added killing/maiming and rape/other sexual violence as independent triggers for listing. A 2011 resolution added attacks on schools and hospitals, and a 2015 resolution added abduction as a further listing criterion. As of the most recent reporting period, the six grave violations monitored under the MRM are: killing and maiming; recruitment and use of children; rape and other forms of sexual violence; abductions; attacks on schools and hospitals; and denial of humanitarian access — the last of which, notably, cannot by itself trigger formal listing of a party, a procedural asymmetry that has drawn criticism from child-protection advocates given the scale of humanitarian-access denial documented in recent reporting cycles.

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HISTORY OF THE AGENDA

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Until 2018, the entire body of Council resolutions in this series concentrated on protecting children during active conflict but offered no systematic guidance on post-conflict reintegration or on children's participation in peace processes. This changed with resolution 2427 (2018), which for the first time required that child-protection provisions — particularly release and reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and groups — be integrated into peace negotiations, ceasefire arrangements, and their monitoring mechanisms, and that children's protection needs be built into conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategy more broadly.

- • 1996 — Machel Report; General Assembly establishes the Office of the Special Representative (res. 51/77)
- • 1999 — SC res. 1261, first Council resolution on children and armed conflict
- • 2000 — SC res. 1314; GA adopts OPAC (res. 54/263)
- • 2005 — SC res. 1612 establishes the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and Security Council Working Group
- • 2009 / 2011 / 2015 — Successive resolutions progressively broaden listing triggers to killing/maiming, sexual violence, attacks on schools/hospitals, and abduction
- • 2018 — SC res. 2427, integration of child protection into peace processes and post-conflict recovery

HISTORY OF THE AGENDA

♦ **The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, 2000–Present**

The single most consequential development in the modern history of this agenda is the Security Council's adoption, on 31 October 2000, of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Adopted unanimously, it was the first formal Security Council instrument to recognise the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and to impose binding obligations on parties to conflict to prevent violations of women's rights, while affirming women's right to participate in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. The United Nations itself has described the resolution as bringing into the open 'one of history's greatest silences' — the systematic and widespread practice of conflict-related sexual violence.

Resolution 1325 did not stand alone; it became the founding text of an architecture now comprising ten Security Council resolutions, customarily divided by scholars and UN practice into two functional clusters. The first cluster concerns women's participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding: resolutions 1325 (2000), 1889 (2009), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), and 2493 (2019). The second cluster concerns the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV): resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), and 2467 (2019). The resolutions are commonly organised around four 'pillars': Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery.

It is important for delegates to recognise that resolution 1325 did not emerge from nowhere: it is widely understood, including in the UN's own institutional documentation, as the direct normative successor to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995, whose Section E (paragraphs 131–149) is devoted to 'Women and Armed Conflict.' The five-year gap between Beijing and resolution 1325 reflects the political work required to move from a non-binding conference outcome document to a binding Security Council instrument addressing the same substantive concerns.

♦ **From the Commission on Human Rights to the Human Rights Council**

Delegates should recognise that the present forum — the Human Rights Council — is itself a comparatively recent institutional development, having replaced the

HISTORY OF THE AGENDA

Commission on Human Rights in 2006 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251. The Council inherited and substantially expanded the human-rights-law track of this agenda, centred on the CRC, CEDAW, and the Universal Periodic Review, while the Security Council retained primary institutional ownership of the WPS and CAAC tracks. The relationship between these bodies is collaborative rather than hierarchical: the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has, for example, provided background information for seventeen thematic and country-specific Human Rights Council resolutions and engaged with nine Special Procedures mandate-holders, while the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Office of the Special Representative formalised their cooperation through a 2024 memorandum of understanding.

♦ **The Contemporary Period: Scale, Saturation, and Persistent Gaps (2018–Present)**

The most recent reporting period documented by UN bodies indicates that the scale of the underlying crisis has not diminished and, by several measures, has worsened. The Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict reported to the 58th session of the Human Rights Council that in 2024 more than one in six children globally lived in conflict-affected situations. The Secretary-General's most recent annual report on children and armed conflict, covering 2024, recorded 41,370 verified grave violations against children — the third consecutive year of precipitous increases — with killing and maiming the single most prevalent category, accounting for 11,967 children killed or maimed in that year alone.

Against this backdrop of rising violations, the same reporting period also records genuine cumulative achievement: since the children-and-armed-conflict agenda began in 1999, more than 200,000 children have been released from armed forces and groups through dialogue and Action Plans, with over 115,000 of those releases occurring since the year 2000 alone, and more than 16,000 children formerly associated with armed forces or groups receiving protection or reintegration support in 2024 specifically. Delegates should hold both facts together rather than treating them as contradictory: the mechanisms created by this agenda demonstrably work where applied, even as the overall incidence of violations rises faster than the mechanisms can be deployed at scale.

HISTORY OF THE AGENDA

At the twenty-fifth anniversary of resolution 1325 in 2025, member states and the Secretariat alike acknowledged that implementation has fallen markedly short of the framework's ambitions. The Secretary-General's own reporting found that, since 2015, only two of thirty recommendations directed at the United Nations under the WPS framework had been fully implemented. Delegates should treat this implementation gap — rather than any deficiency in the underlying legal architecture — as the central diagnostic problem the committee is being asked to address.



PREVIOUS ACTION

This section sets out, in narrative and chronological form, the principal institutional actions taken by United Nations bodies on this agenda — distinct from the treaty and resolution texts themselves, which are catalogued in Section 3. The purpose is to give delegates a working sense of what mechanisms currently exist, how they were built up over time, and what they have and have not achieved, so that resolution drafting in committee can build meaningfully on existing machinery rather than duplicating it.

✦ Establishing the Institutional Mandate (1993–1997)

The institutional starting point for this agenda is General Assembly resolution 48/157 (1993), which authorised the Secretary-General to appoint an independent expert to study the impact of armed conflict on children. The Secretary-General appointed Graça Machel, former Minister of Education of Mozambique, to this role in June 1994. Over the following two years, Machel travelled to numerous conflict-affected countries and consulted children, families, humanitarian workers, and government officials directly — an unusually field-driven methodology for a UN expert study at the time.

Machel's report, presented to the General Assembly's Third Committee on 26 August 1996, did more than document harm: it generated immediate institutional consequences. Acting on its central recommendation, the General Assembly adopted resolution 51/77 in December 1996, formally creating the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and requiring that the position report annually to both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. One hundred and twenty-nine Member States co-sponsored the resulting resolution — an unusually broad sponsorship base that signalled early, near-universal acceptance of the principle that children's protection in conflict required dedicated, ongoing institutional attention rather than episodic responses to individual crises.

A further, less frequently cited consequence of the Machel process was internal to the UN system itself: because several of the country studies prepared for the report found that the arrival of peacekeeping personnel was associated with a measurable rise in child victims of prostitution, the United Nations ordered an internal investigation into sexual exploitation of children by its own peacekeeping

PREVIOUS ACTION

troops. This 1996 finding is the institutional origin of what later became a much larger UN-wide effort on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel, and establishes that this agenda has, from its founding moment, applied to the conduct of international actors deployed to help, not solely to parties engaged in hostilities.

✦ **Building the Children and Armed Conflict Monitoring Architecture (1999–2018)**

Between the creation of the mandate in 1996 and the establishment of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in 2005, the Security Council took incremental action to convert the Machel Report's findings into operational machinery. Resolution 1261 (1999) formally placed children and armed conflict on the Council's agenda as a recurring thematic item and identified an initial category of grave violations warranting attention. Resolutions 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), and 1539 (2004) progressively built toward an accountability system: each refined the process by which the Secretary-General would identify, and eventually formally list, specific parties to conflict responsible for violations against children, and required engagement toward time-bound corrective action plans with those parties.

This incremental process culminated in resolution 1612 (2005), through which the Security Council took what its own implementing office has described as an 'unprecedented step': establishing the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) for the systematic, accurate, timely, and objective documentation of grave violations against children in armed conflict, supported by a dedicated Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The Working Group comprises all fifteen Council members and operates by consensus, reviewing country-level MRM reports and issuing formal Conclusions that may recommend action by parties to conflict, Member States, UN entities, and donors.

The MRM's listing mechanism has itself evolved considerably since 2005. Initially, the Secretary-General's annual report could list only parties that recruit and use children. Resolution 1882 (2009) added killing and maiming of children, and rape and other sexual violence against children, as independent triggers for listing. A subsequent 2011 resolution added the targeting of schools and hospitals, and a 2015 resolution added abduction of children as a further listing criterion. The denial of humanitarian access to children, while monitored and reported as one of the six

PREVIOUS ACTION

grave violations, remains — notably — the one violation that cannot by itself trigger formal listing of a party in the Secretary-General's annexes, a structural gap that child-protection bodies have flagged as increasingly significant given the scale of access denial documented in recent conflicts.

Listed parties are engaged in dialogue toward signing Action Plans — written, mutually agreed commitments between the United Nations and a listed government or armed group to halt and prevent the violations for which they were listed, with a defined pathway to eventual delisting once compliance is verified. This Action Plan mechanism has produced measurable results: the Office of the Special Representative reports that more than 115,000 children have been released from armed forces and groups since 2000 through this dialogue-and-action-plan process, and that in 2024 alone, over 16,000 children formerly associated with armed forces or groups received protection or reintegration support.

The most significant structural action since the MRM's creation came with resolution 2427 (2018), which addressed a long-standing limitation in the Council's approach: until that point, all resolutions in this series concentrated exclusively on protecting children during active hostilities, with no systematic framework addressing children's needs once a conflict moved toward resolution. Resolution 2427 required, for the first time, that child-protection provisions — including the release and reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and groups — be built into peace negotiations, ceasefire agreements, and their monitoring mechanisms, and that conflict-prevention and peacebuilding strategies incorporate child-protection planning from the outset rather than as an afterthought.

♦ Building the Children and Armed Conflict Monitoring Architecture (1999–2018)

The Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 1325 on 31 October 2000 was the founding action of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. In a 2004

PREVIOUS ACTION

Presidential Statement, the Council went further, formally encouraging Member States to translate the resolution's commitments into National Action Plans (NAPs) — country-level strategy documents detailing how a state intends to implement the WPS framework domestically and in its international engagement. Over one hundred states have since adopted at least a first-generation NAP, with a number of states now on their third, fourth, or fifth generation of planning documents, reflecting iterative learning over more than two decades of implementation.

The Council subsequently took a series of further actions extending the WPS framework's reach. Resolution 1820 (2008) was the first Council resolution to name conflict-related sexual violence explicitly as a threat to international peace and security in its own right, rather than as a byproduct of conflict, and to classify rape as capable of constituting a war crime or crime against humanity. Resolution 1888 (2009) followed by mandating that peacekeeping missions actively prevent and respond to sexual violence, and by creating the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict together with a dedicated Team of Experts on Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, deployable to support national justice systems. Resolution 1889 (2009) added a results-tracking dimension, requesting that the Secretary-General develop concrete indicators to monitor implementation of resolution 1325 and establishing Women Protection Advisers to be deployed within peacekeeping missions.

Resolution 1960 (2010) shifted the framework toward accountability, requesting that the Secretary-General compile and make public lists of parties to conflict credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of sexual violence — an explicit ‘naming and shaming’ mechanism intended to lay groundwork for future sanctions designations. Resolutions 2106 and 2122, both adopted in 2013, operationalised these accountability provisions further, with 2106 stressing survivor-centred justice mechanisms and 2122 addressing persistent

PREVIOUS ACTION

justice gaps and reaffirming women's role in conflict resolution processes more broadly.

Resolution 2242 (2015), adopted to mark the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325, created the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security — a standing mechanism for the Security Council to receive regular, structured briefings on WPS issues in specific country situations — and explicitly linked the WPS agenda to the Council's counter-terrorism and violent-extremism work, reflecting the period's broader securitisation of these issues. Resolutions 2467 and 2493, both adopted in 2019 to mark the agenda's own internal milestones, respectively introduced an explicitly survivor-centred approach to conflict-related sexual violence — including, for the first time, direct attention to children born of such violence — and called for full, comprehensive implementation of all nine preceding WPS resolutions taken together.

The Secretary-General has reported regularly to the Security Council on implementation progress, including through periodic indicator reports (beginning with S/2010/498) tracking quantifiable measures of women's participation, protection outcomes, and resource allocation across the WPS framework. The most recent reporting available, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of resolution 1325 in 2025, found that implementation has been markedly uneven: since 2015, only two of thirty recommendations directed specifically at the United Nations system itself under this framework have been fully implemented, with the remainder showing partial progress or none at all.

♦ Recent Institutional Developments (2024–2026)

In 2024, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict formalised their working relationship through a memorandum of understanding, including joint work toward a draft General Comment No. 27 on children's rights to access to justice and effective remedies — an explicit attempt to deepen the connection between the Council's treaty-monitoring architecture and the Security Council's operational CAAC mechanism.

PREVIOUS ACTION

On 9 March 2026, the Human Rights Council convened, for the first time, an Annual Day on the Rights of the Child specifically dedicated to children in armed conflict, deliberately timed to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of OPAC's entry into force. The ICRC's address to that session, delivered by its Chief Legal Officer, explicitly reframed the contemporary challenge facing this agenda: not a lack of legal protection, but a sustained failure of compliance by parties already bound by existing law.

The Secretary-General's most recent annual report on children and armed conflict (covering calendar year 2024) recorded 41,370 verified grave violations — the highest level since systematic monitoring began under the MRM in 2005, and the third consecutive year in which the number of recorded violations increased. Killing and maiming was the single most prevalent violation category that year, with 4,676 children killed and 7,291 maimed. The Security Council's June 2025 annual open debate on children and armed conflict, convened under the Guyanese Council presidency, was explicitly framed around 'effective strategies to end and prevent grave violations against children,' with particular attention to explosive ordnance and the long-term consequences of explosive remnants of war — reflecting a shift in emphasis toward weapons-specific and environment-specific drivers of child harm in contemporary conflicts, alongside the persistent challenge of conflict-related sexual violence against children.

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

This section consolidates the binding and non-binding instruments that committee delegations are expected to invoke during substantive debate, moderated caucusing, and resolution drafting, followed by complete tabulated records of the relevant General Assembly, Security Council, and Human Rights Council action. Instruments are organised by legal character — international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law, and Security Council law — since each carries a different mode of obligation, a different enforcement mechanism, and a different universe of state parties.

♦ Recent Institutional Developments (2024–2026)

1 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Twin Covenants (1966)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), while not itself a binding treaty, is repeatedly invoked in the preambles of every subsequent instrument discussed below, including the 1974 Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, which explicitly grounds the entitlement of conflict-affected women and children to shelter, food, and medical aid ‘in accordance with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, [and] the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.’ The two 1966 Covenants — the ICCPR and the ICESCR — supply the binding civil-political and economic-social rights respectively that apply to all persons, including in armed conflict, subject to permissible derogation under ICCPR Article 4 in a declared public emergency.

2 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979)

CEDAW is the principal binding treaty on women's rights and is supervised by the CEDAW Committee through the State reporting procedure. While CEDAW

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

contains no article specifically addressing armed conflict, the Committee has progressively read conflict-related obligations into the Convention through General Recommendation No. 30 (2013), which directly addresses the prevention, protection, and redress obligations of States Parties in conflict, post-conflict, and disaster-prevention contexts, and which explicitly affirms the Convention's linkages with the Security Council's Women, Peace and Security agenda. CEDAW's Optional Protocol (1999) additionally permits individual and inter-state communications, providing a complementary accountability avenue for conflict-related gender-based violence alongside Security Council resolution 1325.

3 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) and the OPAC

Already discussed in Section 1, the CRC and its 2000 Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) form the binding core of children's-rights law in conflict.

Three provisions are of particular drafting relevance:

- Article 38 CRC — obligation to respect IHL applicable to children and to take all feasible measures to ensure children under fifteen do not take direct part in hostilities (subsequently raised to eighteen under OPAC's straight-eighteen compromise for direct hostilities).
- Article 39 CRC — obligation of physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration for child victims of armed conflict, exploitation, or torture.
- OPAC Articles 1–4 — prohibition on compulsory recruitment under eighteen; minimum safeguards for voluntary recruitment from sixteen; absolute prohibition on recruitment or use by non-state armed groups of any person under eighteen.

As of the most recent reporting available from the Office of the Special

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, OPAC has 173 States Parties, making it among the most widely ratified instruments in this entire legal field, though a residual group of states retain reservations or declared lower recruitment ages permitted under the Protocol's flexible declaration mechanism.

4 General Comment No. 27 and the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Delegates citing recent jurisprudential development should be aware that the Committee on the Rights of the Child has been developing, with substantive input from the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, a draft General Comment No. 27 on children's rights to access to justice and effective remedies, formalised through a 2024 memorandum of understanding between the two bodies — evidence of the deepening institutional linkage between the Human Rights Council's treaty-body architecture and the Security Council's operational CAAC mechanism.

♦ International Humanitarian Law

1 The Four Geneva Conventions of 1949

The Fourth Geneva Convention (GC IV), relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, remains the principal humanitarian-law instrument for civilian women and children. Article 27 prohibits attacks on women's honour, specifically naming rape, enforced prostitution, and any form of indecent assault. Articles 24 and 50, as recently re-emphasised in the ICRC's updated Commentary to GC IV, require continued access to education, age-appropriate food, and healthcare for children, and impose special evacuation and identification duties on occupying and belligerent powers with respect to children.

2 The 1977 Additional Protocols

Additional Protocol I (international armed conflicts) and Additional Protocol II

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

non-international armed conflicts) extended these protections. Article 77 of Protocol I and Article 4(3) of Protocol II prohibit the recruitment of children under fifteen and require special protection measures including evacuation, family reunification, and education during conflict.

3 Customary International Humanitarian Law

The ICRC's Customary IHL Study (2005) finds that the core protections discussed above — prohibition of attacks on civilians, prohibition of rape and sexual violence as a method of warfare, and special protection of children from recruitment — bind even states that are not party to the Additional Protocols, including by virtue of customary international law. This is the legal basis on which delegations frequently argue that obligations apply even to non-signatory or reservation-holding states and to non-state armed groups, which cannot formally ratify treaties but remain bound by customary IHL and by Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions.

♦ International Criminal Law

1 The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)

The Rome Statute is the principal instrument criminalising, at the individual level, the conduct that the human rights and humanitarian instruments above prohibit at the state level. Of direct relevance to this agenda:

- Article 6 — genocide, including ‘forcibly transferring children of the group to another group’ as an enumerated genocidal act.
- Article 7 — crimes against humanity, including rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, and persecution on grounds including gender.
- Article 8 — war crimes, explicitly including ‘conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into the national armed forces or using

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

them to participate actively in hostilities’ as both an international and non-international armed conflict war crime, and including rape and other sexual violence as grave breaches.

The Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict explicitly notes in its preamble the Rome Statute's criminalisation of child conscription as reinforcing the treaty obligation — a textual linkage delegates should cite when arguing for the mutual reinforcement of human rights treaty law and international criminal law.

2 The Genocide Convention (1948)

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) defines genocide, under Article 2, to include, among the enumerated acts, ‘imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group’ and ‘forcibly transferring children of the group to another group’ — provisions with direct application to allegations of conflict-related sexual and reproductive violence and forced child transfer in armed conflict generally. The Convention's compromissory clause, Article IX, provides the jurisdictional basis for contentious state-responsibility litigation before the International Court of Justice in relevant cases.

♦ **Security Council Law: The Women, Peace and Security Framework in Detail**

Security Council resolutions occupy a distinctive place in this legal architecture: unlike treaties, they do not require ratification, and resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter are binding on all member states by virtue of Charter Articles 25 and 103. The ten WPS resolutions discussed in Section 1 were adopted under the Council's general thematic powers rather than enforcement

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

powers, meaning their binding character is more contested than a Chapter VII resolution — a distinction some Member States have raised in Council debate when cautioning against duplicating the distinct competencies of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and the Commission on the Status of Women.

The four pillars of the WPS agenda — Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery — remain the organising framework most frequently used in resolution drafting. Delegates should note that the architecture is cumulative rather than substitutive: each successive resolution adds to, rather than replaces, the obligations created by its predecessors, meaning a state's WPS obligations today are the sum of all ten resolutions read together.

♦ The Beijing Declaration and Other Soft-Law Instruments

1 The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

Section E of the Beijing Platform ('Women and Armed Conflict,' paragraphs 131–149) is non-binding but politically authoritative, and is the acknowledged precursor of resolution 1325. It remains a regular point of reference in statements during Security Council open debates on women, peace and security.

2 National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS

Over one hundred states have adopted National Action Plans for the implementation of resolution 1325, a practice the Security Council first encouraged in a 2004 Presidential Statement. NAPs are useful evidentiary tools in committee debate: a state's possession of a NAP, and its generation (first, second, third, and so on), is a frequently cited proxy for genuine policy commitment to the agenda.

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

3 The 2026 Annual Day on the Rights of the Child

The Human Rights Council convened, for the first time, an Annual Day on the Rights of the Child specifically dedicated to children in armed conflict, on 9 March 2026, coinciding with the twenty-fifth anniversary of OPAC's entry into force. This is the most recent major institutional milestone in the agenda's history.

✦ UN General Assembly Resolutions — Full Record

RESOLUTION	YEAR	SUBJECT
2444 (XXIII)	1968	RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARMED CONFLICT
2597 (XXIV)	1969	FOLLOW-UP ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARMED CONFLICT
2674 (XXV) / 2675 (XXV)	1970	BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR PROTECTION OF CIVILIAN POPULATIONS IN ARMED CONFLICT
3318 (XXIX)	1974	DECLARATION ON THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN EMERGENCY AND ARMED CONFLICT
44/25	1989	ADOPTION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
48/157	1993	AUTHORISES SECRETARY-GENERAL TO APPOINT EXPERT ON IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON CHILDREN (LEADS TO MACHEL REPORT)

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

51/77	1996	WELCOMES MACHEL REPORT; ESTABLISHES THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE MANDATE
54/263	2000	ADOPTION OF OPAC AND THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL ON THE SALE OF CHILDREN, CHILD PROSTITUTION AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY
60/251	2006	ESTABLISHES THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, REPLACING THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
76/173	2021	SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS; EXPLICIT REFERENCE TO THE WPS AGENDA

♦ UN Security Council Resolutions — Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC)

RESOLUTION	YEAR	CORE ACTION
1261	1999	FIRST COUNCIL RESOLUTION EXCLUSIVELY ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT; IDENTIFIES INITIAL GRAVE VIOLATIONS
1314	2000	STRENGTHENS MONITORING; CALLS FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN PEACE AGREEMENTS
1379	2001	REQUESTS SECRETARY-GENERAL TO BEGIN LISTING PARTIES RECRUITING/USING CHILDREN

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

1460	2003	CALLS FOR TIME-BOUND ACTION PLANS TO END RECRUITMENT OF CHILDREN
1539	2004	REFINES LISTING/DELISTING PROCEDURE FOR PARTIES TO CONFLICT
1612	2005	ESTABLISHES THE MONITORING AND REPORTING MECHANISM (MRM) AND THE SECURITY COUNCIL WORKING GROUP
1882	2009	ADDS KILLING/MAIMING AND RAPE/SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS INDEPENDENT LISTING TRIGGERS
1998	2011	ADDS ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS AS A LISTING TRIGGER
2068	2012	CALLS FOR ACCELERATED IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLANS
2143	2014	ADDRESSES MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS
2225	2015	HADDS ABDUCTION OF CHILDREN AS A LISTING CRITERION
2427	2018	INTEGRATES CHILD PROTECTION INTO PEACE PROCESSES, CEASEFIRES, AND POST-CONFLICT RECOVERY/REINTEGRATION

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

♦ UN Security Council Resolutions — Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

RESOLUTION	YEAR	CORE CONTRIBUTION
1325	2000	FOUNDING RESOLUTION; THE FOUR PILLARS — PARTICIPATION, PROTECTION, PREVENTION, RECOVERY
1820	2008	FIRST TO NAME CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS A THREAT TO PEACE/SECURITY; CLASSIFIES RAPE AS POTENTIAL WAR CRIME/CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY
1888	2009	MANDATES PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS TO PREVENT/RESPOND TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE; CREATES THE SRSG ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT
1889	2009	CREATES IMPLEMENTATION INDICATORS AND WOMEN PROTECTION ADVISERS
1960	2010	ESTABLISHES ‘NAMING AND SHAMING’ OF PARTIES RESPONSIBLE FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE; GROUNDWORK FOR SANCTIONS
2106	2013	OPERATIONALISES PRIOR CRSV RESOLUTIONS; STRESSES SURVIVOR-CENTRED JUSTICE
2122	2013	STRENGTHENS WOMEN’S ROLE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION; ADDRESSES JUSTICE GAPS
2242	2015	CREATES THE INFORMAL EXPERTS GROUP ON WPS; LINKS WPS TO COUNTER-TERRORISM AGENDA

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

2467	2019	SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH; REPARATIONS; CHILDREN BORN OF CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE
2493	2019	CALLS FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL PRIOR WPS RESOLUTIONS

Selected Presidential Statements supplementing the resolution series: S/PRST/2002/32; S/PRST/2004/40; S/PRST/2005/52; S/PRST/2006/42; S/PRST/2007/5; S/PRST/2007/40; S/PRST/2015/25; S/PRST/2016/9 — each reiterating and extending WPS commitments between full resolutions.

♦ Human Rights Council Action

ACTION	YEAR	DESCRIPTION
HRC RES. 55/29	—	REQUESTS HIGH COMMISSIONER’S REPORT ON CHILDREN’S RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ARMED CONFLICT
UPR MECHANISM	ONGOING	UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW REGULARLY ADDRESSES WOMEN’S/CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED STATES
CRC GENERAL COMMENT NO. 27 (DRAFT)	2024	CHILDREN’S RIGHT TO ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND EFFECTIVE REMEDIES; JOINT WORK WITH OSRSG-CAAC
HRC 61ST SESSION ANNUAL DAY	9 MAR 2026	FIRST ANNUAL DAY ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD DEDICATED TO CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

The Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

additionally provided background information for seventeen thematic and country-specific Human Rights Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, and has engaged with nine Special Procedures mandate-holders on this theme.

✦ **Key Operative Text — Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (UNGA res. 3318 (XXIX), 1974)**

Given the Declaration's foundational status, delegates should have command of its specific operative paragraphs, reproduced here in summarised form for ease of citation in working papers and resolutions:

1. Prohibits and condemns attacks and bombings on the civilian population, which inflict incalculable suffering, especially on women and children, who are the most vulnerable members of the population.
2. Calls upon all States to abide fully by their obligations under the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 1949 Geneva Conventions.
3. Calls upon all States involved in armed conflicts, military operations in foreign territories, or military operations in territories still under colonial domination, to spare women and children from the ravages of war.
4. Declares that all forms of repression and cruel and inhuman treatment of women and children, including imprisonment, torture, killing, mass arrests, collective punishment, destruction of dwellings, and forcible eviction, committed by belligerents in the course of military operations or in occupied territories, shall be considered criminal.
5. Declares that women and children belonging to the civilian population and finding themselves in circumstances of emergency and armed conflict shall not be deprived of shelter, food, medical aid, or other inalienable rights, in accordance with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK, PAST RESOLUTIONS AND TREATIES

the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

Delegates drafting resolution clauses should note that this Declaration's language is recommendatory ('calls upon,' 'declares') rather than mandatory, consistent with its status as a General Assembly declaration rather than a treaty; its force is political and normative rather than directly binding, though several of its substantive prohibitions are independently binding through the Geneva Conventions it invokes.

♦ **Key Operative Text — OPAC (2000)**

The Optional Protocol's core obligations, useful for direct citation:

- Article 1 — States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces who have not attained the age of eighteen do not take a direct part in hostilities.
- Article 2 — States Parties shall ensure that persons under eighteen are not compulsorily recruited into their armed forces.
- Article 3 — States Parties may permit voluntary recruitment from age sixteen, provided such recruitment is genuinely voluntary, carried out with the informed consent of the person's parents or legal guardians, and that the person is reliably informed of the duties involved and provides reliable proof of age prior to acceptance.
- Article 4 — Non-state armed groups should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of eighteen; States Parties shall take all feasible measures to prevent such recruitment and use, including the adoption of legal measures necessary to prohibit and criminalise these practices.

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