

InterMUN 2025

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

Addressing the exploitation in laboral fields, focusing on under age workers and their rights.



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Welcoming message from the chair:

Honorable Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Our topic this year, “*Addressing the Exploitation in Laboral Fields, Focusing on Underage Workers and Their Rights,*” is one of the most urgent humanitarian and social issues facing our world today. Millions of children around the globe are still trapped in exploitative labor conditions that rob them of their childhood, education, and safety. Despite decades of global progress, the fight against child labor and exploitation continues to be a major challenge that demands renewed commitment, collaboration, and innovation from the international community.

As representatives of your nations, you are tasked not only with analyzing the problem but also with proposing viable, compassionate, and sustainable solutions. This committee will call upon your ability to think critically, debate respectfully, and work diplomatically toward protecting the most vulnerable members of society. Remember that every statistic

represents a child whose right to safety, education, and freedom has been denied. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that those rights are restored and protected. I encourage each of you to approach this debate with empathy, integrity, and determination. Together, we can design policies that move us closer to a world where no child is exploited for labor.

Sincerely,

Abril and Rebecca

Committee's Background:

The United Nations Human Rights Council, commonly known as the UNHRC, was established in 2006 to replace the former Commission on Human Rights. The purpose of the Council is to promote and protect human rights globally and to respond to violations wherever they occur. It functions as an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system and is composed of 47 member states elected by the General Assembly. These members serve three-year terms and meet regularly in Geneva, Switzerland, to address urgent issues concerning human dignity and fundamental freedoms.

The Council's work is guided by principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, and non-selectivity. It relies on several mechanisms to fulfill its mandate, including the Universal Periodic Review, which assesses the human rights record of every UN member state, and the appointment of Special Procedures, which are independent experts who monitor and report on specific human rights issues or country situations. The UNHRC also establishes commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions when large-scale human rights violations occur.

One of the Council's main priorities has always been the protection of children. It recognizes that minors are among the most vulnerable groups in the world, often lacking access to justice, education, and protection from exploitation. Through collaboration with other UN agencies, such as UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UNHRC seeks to create global standards that ensure every child can live a safe, healthy, and fulfilling life free from abuse or forced labor.

Topic Background:

The exploitation of minors in labor fields is a long-standing and complex issue that transcends borders, cultures, and economic systems. According to the International Labour Organization, child labor is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development. Not all forms of work performed by children are considered exploitative, as some forms of light work, such as helping parents with household chores or small family businesses under safe conditions, can contribute to a child's development. However, when labor interferes with a child's education, health, and personal growth, it becomes a violation of their basic human rights.

Historically, child labor emerged as a widespread issue during the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In factories, mines, and agricultural fields, children were valued as cheap labor and forced to work long hours in dangerous environments. Over time, public awareness and early social reforms led to the creation of labor laws and compulsory education in industrialized nations, significantly reducing child labor in these regions. However, the problem did not disappear—it simply shifted geographically. As globalization advanced, the demand for inexpensive labor moved to developing nations, where weak enforcement of labor laws, poverty, and informal economies allowed exploitation to continue.

The international legal framework against child labor is well established but unevenly implemented. Foundational documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognize the right to education and protection from exploitation. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is the most widely ratified human rights treaty and obliges governments to protect children from economic exploitation. The International Labour Organization further strengthened this legal structure through Convention No. 138 (1973), which sets a minimum age for employment, and Convention No. 182 (1999), which focuses on eliminating the worst forms of child labor, such as slavery, trafficking, forced labor, and hazardous work. Despite these commitments, many countries struggle to translate international law into effective domestic enforcement, largely due to economic and institutional limitations.

Current situation:

As of 2025, more than 160 million children are engaged in child labor worldwide, representing nearly one in ten children globally. Of these, almost half are involved in hazardous work that directly endangers their health, safety, or moral development. The majority of child laborers, about 70 percent, work in agriculture, where they handle heavy machinery, dangerous tools, or toxic chemicals. Others are employed in manufacturing, construction, mining, and informal service sectors, such as street vending or domestic work.

The regions most affected include Sub-Saharan Africa, where almost one in four children works under exploitative conditions, followed by Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America. Conflict-affected areas, such as parts of the Middle East, are also experiencing rising levels of child labor, particularly among refugee and displaced populations. These

children often face double vulnerability—first as victims of conflict, and second as victims of economic exploitation.

The underlying causes of child labor are multifaceted. Poverty remains the most significant factor, as families living in extreme economic hardship often rely on the income generated by their children for survival. Limited access to education also plays a crucial role, as children who are unable to attend school frequently end up in the workforce. Additionally, weak enforcement of labor laws and corruption allow illegal labor practices to continue unchecked. In some regions, cultural norms contribute to the normalization of children working from a young age, particularly in rural communities.

Globalization has further complicated this issue. Many multinational corporations operate through extensive supply chains that often obscure where and how goods are produced. While some companies have implemented Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs and ethical sourcing policies, enforcement and transparency remain inconsistent. As a result, products consumed in developed countries frequently originate from factories, fields, or mines where children are exploited.

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened this situation by pushing millions of families into poverty. Economic instability, school closures, and reduced government resources forced many children into labor to compensate for lost family income. The International Labour Organization warned that the pandemic reversed years of progress, leading to the first increase in global child labor numbers in two decades.

The international community has long recognized the urgency of ending child exploitation. The United Nations and its specialized agencies have launched numerous initiatives aimed at eradicating child labor. One of the most notable is the Alliance 8.7, an initiative led by the ILO and UNICEF that seeks to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.7, which calls for the eradication of child labor in all its forms by 2025.

This alliance encourages global cooperation and resource sharing between governments, NGOs, and corporations to accelerate progress.

UNICEF, in partnership with national governments, has implemented educational and social protection programs designed to keep children in school and out of the workforce. The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children also supports efforts to protect minors from abuse, trafficking, and forced labor. Additionally, many nations have introduced conditional cash transfer programs that provide financial assistance to families in exchange for keeping their children enrolled in school. Countries such as Brazil, India, and the Philippines have shown that combining poverty reduction programs with education initiatives can significantly lower rates of child labor.

Despite these efforts, the challenge of enforcement remains substantial. In many countries, labor inspectors lack resources or training, and judicial systems fail to hold employers accountable. Furthermore, informal and illegal economies continue to operate beyond government oversight, making it difficult to track and prevent child labor violations.

The eradication of child labor cannot be achieved through legislation alone. Deep-rooted social and economic structures must be addressed. Many families are trapped in a cycle of poverty that leaves them with few alternatives to sending their children to work. Without social protections such as healthcare, unemployment benefits, and affordable education, families remain vulnerable to economic shocks. Corruption also plays a role, as weak institutions and lack of political will allow exploitative industries to continue operating with impunity.

Climate change has also begun to influence child labor trends. Natural disasters, droughts, and crop failures force families dependent on agriculture to seek alternative incomes, often through the labor of their children. In this way, environmental degradation

indirectly contributes to the exploitation of minors. Migration and conflict further complicate the issue. Refugee and internally displaced children are frequently recruited into informal economies, exploited by traffickers, or forced into domestic servitude.

Finally, there is a growing recognition that ending child labor requires the active involvement of the private sector. Companies must be held accountable for the conditions in their supply chains. Transparency laws, such as the United Kingdom's Modern Slavery Act or the European Union's due diligence regulations, have made progress in this area, but more comprehensive international frameworks are needed to ensure corporate responsibility and protect vulnerable workers.

Conclusion:

The exploitation of minors in labor fields represents one of the gravest violations of human rights in the modern era. It strips children of their education, their health, and their dignity, perpetuating a cycle of poverty that hinders global development. The UNHRC has both the authority and the moral obligation to address this issue decisively. Protecting children from exploitation is not merely an act of compassion—it is a fundamental requirement for achieving equality, justice, and sustainable development.

Delegates in this committee have the unique opportunity to reaffirm the international community's commitment to protecting children and to propose innovative solutions that tackle the root causes of exploitation. By strengthening education systems, promoting fair economic policies, demanding transparency from corporations, and supporting vulnerable families, we can move closer to achieving the vision of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7: a world where every child is free from forced labor. The future of millions of children depends on our collective action today.

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