



**SOCHUM**



**Topic:** Addressing the impact of armed conflict on young adults with special emphasis on protecting them from becoming members of the local armed groups, especially in underdeveloped nations, and underserved communities

**Committee:** GA3 - Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

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**Position:** President Chair

### **A. Introduction to the Committee**

The Committee on Social Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs (SOCHUM) of the General Assembly (GA) is one of the most significant committees in the UN system. In order to tackle global issues that fall under the categories of social humanitarianism and culture SOCHUM was established.

International norms and policies that uphold human rights combat poverty and foster intercultural understanding have been greatly influenced by it. Its extensive mandate covers a wide range of topics including disarmament non-proliferation and peacekeeping operations. Through dialogue and negotiation, SOCHUM brings together experts from a variety of fields civil society organizations from member states, and experts to reach a consensus on solutions to challenging global issues. With its efforts, SOCHUM significantly advances the creation of a more just equitable, and peaceful world.

### **B. Introduction to the Agenda Item**

The topic of discussion in the agenda item “addressing the impact of armed conflict on young adults” is the protection of young adults from being enlisted in local armed groups, which is a critical concern in the world community, particularly in developing countries and underdeveloped ones. This subject is significant as it is acknowledged that youth are disproportionately impacted by armed conflicts, which frequently have long-term effects like trauma displacement and educational forfeiture. The difficulty is heightened in areas where social unrest, a lack of access to education and economic hardship foster an environment that is favorable to armed group recruitment. A strategy that generates tactics to improve educational opportunities, encourage economic development, and fortify social support networks is quite important to establish a comprehensive framework to address this matter. Additionally, it entails promoting global collaboration and accountability systems to stop armed groups from taking advantage of marginalized communities. Through addressing the underlying factors that lead to young people becoming involved in armed conflict and carrying out focused interventions, the main subject is to protect the prospects of young adults and promote enduring peace and stability in impacted areas.

## C. Key Terms

**ARMED CONFLICT:** A contested incompatibility that concerns two governments or the national government and non-governmental forces.

**CHILD SOLDIER:** A person below 18 years of age who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity.

**CIVILIAN:** A person who is not engaged in armed services or actively involved in a conflict.

**COMBATANT:** A person or nation involved in fighting in a battle/conflict, non-civilian.

**POVERTY:** The state of being extremely poor, inferior in financial status.

**PTSD:** Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a condition that appears after a person is exposed to high amounts of poor conditions or horrid experiences.

**YOUNG ADULT:** A person in their teens or early twenties in terms of age.

## D. General Overview

### a. Underlying Reasons Behind Youth's Involvement in Armed Groups

Beyond immediate threats and active conflict, many other factors contribute to the complicated issue of adolescents joining armed groups. The breakdown of families and communities, unemployment, poverty, and inadequate governance stand out as important contributors among these contributing factors.

**Poverty and unemployment:** Many young people look for other ways to survive or to get away from the difficult circumstances in their lives due to economic hardship. For those seeking food, shelter, and a sense of community in financially unstable countries and neglected neighborhoods with few employment facilities and difficult living conditions joining an armed group can be an appealing alternative. For those who find it difficult to meet their basic needs, the prospect of even small financial gain can be alluring.

**Poor Governance:** Young people may feel disconnected from politics and disenchanted with the status quo in their state originating from corruption, a lack of transparency, and inadequate leadership. Conditions like these breed pessimism and hopelessness which is why joining armed groups seems like a good way to protest or bring about change – even if it means using force.

**Breakdown of Families and Communities:** Young adults may experience feelings of vulnerability and isolation as a result of the dissolution of family and community ties. Lack of direction and protection makes people more vulnerable to exploitation by armed groups in societies where traditional support networks have been undermined by migration conflict or other types of disruption. Armed groups can offer a sense of structure identity and purpose that can fill the space left by absent family members or community leaders.

For effective strategies to stop teenagers from joining armed groups, it is imperative to comprehend these underlying factors which can easily be associated with armed conflict. An all-encompassing strategy to protect young adults and advance peace and stability in impacted areas must address the aforementioned factors.

#### **b. Primary Concerns on Youth's Involvement in Armed Groups**

**Child Soldier Recruiting:** One of this issue's most concerning features is the recruiting of young people for the military. In addition to breaking international law, this practice exposes young people to terrible experiences like forced labor sexual exploitation, and combat roles. Strong protective measures are necessary as the recruitment of child soldiers is a glaring sign of the vulnerability and desperation that young people in conflict zones face.

**Killing or Maiming of Children:** Directly targeting children in armed conflicts results in a great deal of death and injury in addition to recruitment. This covers both the psychological trauma endured by survivors as well as the physical harm brought on by intentional violence. Violence of this kind affects entire communities and feeds vicious cycles of violence having an effect well beyond the immediate victims. This topic should be considered as the primary concern, since over 90% of direct conflict casualties consist of young adult males.

**Deprivation from Education and Healthcare:** In conflict zones, adolescents' access to education and healthcare is severely restricted, making their situation worse. Denied the chance to reach their full potential and more likely to become entangled in cycles of poverty and violence, these young people are deprived of their fundamental right to education and healthcare.

**Split from Families:** Another serious problem resulting from involvement in armed groups is the division of young adults from their families. As a result of this separation, young people lose the support networks necessary to deal with the difficulties of post-conflict recovery in addition to losing familial ties.

**Exposure to Sexual Violence:** Young adults who take part in armed groups are also subjected to high levels of sexual violence. As a result of the abuse, victims' well-being and dignity are further compromised not only by the immediate harm but also by long-term psychological and physical effects.

An all-comprehensive strategy that incorporates legal safeguards, educational opportunities, healthcare accessibility, and reintegration and reconciliation efforts is needed to address these issues. We can start to lessen the terrible effects of armed conflict on this susceptible group by concentrating on the protection of young adults and giving them the resources and options they require.

### **c. Impact of Youth's Involvement in Armed Groups**

**Change in the Nature of Conflict:** When young adults join armed groups there is frequently a change in the strategies and tactics these groups use. This may result in a more violent and unpredictable style of conflict marked by a rise in the use of explosives and a willingness to wage war in crowded places.

**Increased Use of Explosive Devices:** Conflict zones may see a rise in the use of explosive devices as a result of young adults joining armed groups. These weapons jeopardize civilians long after the conflict has ended by posing a long-term risk of unexploded ordnance in addition to causing immediate destruction and fatalities. An increase in the conduct of hostilities in urban or densely populated areas is often associated with the recruitment of young adults into armed groups, and urban warfare is characterized by the widespread use of civilians as human shields. By exploiting belligerents' adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) norms, this tactic puts civilians at serious risk and makes it more difficult to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants.

**Blurring of the Line Between Civilians and Combatants:** In accordance with International Humanitarian Law, young adults who join armed groups help to blur the line between civilians and combatants. This blending has the potential to worsen the humanitarian catastrophe brought on by armed conflicts and cause a sharp rise in civilian deaths. It also raises serious worries about the applicability of international law in contemporary warfare environments and its efficiency in protecting civilians. It is possible to lessen the catastrophic effects of armed conflict on people and

communities by concentrating on the protection of young adults and addressing the causes that lead to their engagement in armed groups.

**Impact on Mental Health:** Armed conflict particularly in poor and developing nations has a negative influence on the mental health of young adults. Adolescents who grow up in these chaotic times or in the years following them frequently experience extreme emotional distress, homelessness, and challenges accessing mental health services. The psychological ramifications of armed conflict such as the loss of loved ones and the inability to participate in traditional grieving rituals can have a detrimental impact on young people's mental health. The trauma of seeing violence and the fear of joining armed groups aggravate feelings of insecurity and identity loss. Another impact on their future life is that conflict-affected youth frequently have less faith in educational institutions. The perception of education as dangerous or irrelevant by people living in conflict-affected areas can cause them to lose interest in it. Their lack of education limits their opportunities for the future and increases their vulnerability. Adolescents who are directly exposed to violence are removed from their homes and do not have social support networks such as family are much more likely to suffer from mental health problems. Victims of violence often experience mental health issues such as PTSD, anxiety disorders, and major/ mild depression. It is demonstrated in psychological studies that the young adult population who experienced conflict is by far more affected by their experiences compared to other age groups.

## **E. Major Parties Involved**

### **a. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of CONGO**

The young adult population of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is greatly impacted by the major challenges that the country faces. The general demographic lines and historical background of the DRC contain a number of significant issues affecting young adults. Since obtaining independence in 1960, the Democratic Republic of Congo has been involved in multiple conflicts, the most recent of which started in 1998. Young adults are directly impacted by the widespread violence displacement and humanitarian crises brought on by these conflicts. Several young people have been caught in the crossfire, facing serious risks to their safety and wellbeing as either participants in armed groups or victims of violence. Apart from the impacts of direct conflict, a cycle of poverty and vulnerability is perpetuated by young adults as well as lack of education which also makes it difficult for them to find work. Indicating a noticeable youth population that is disproportionately impacted by these difficulties, the DRC median age is comparatively young. Furthermore, the conflict has caused disruptions to healthcare services which makes it challenging for young adults to get the nutrition and medical attention they need. The DRC economy has faced significant challenges over the past years.

Social discontent and economic instability are worsened by high rates of unemployment and underemployment among young adults. The well-being of the future of young adults in the Democratic Republic of Congo necessitates collaborative efforts focused on peacebuilding, healthcare, education, and economic development.

**b. the REPUBLIC of CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

Young adults' circumstances in Côte d'Ivoire are influenced by a complex interplay of political, socioeconomic, and demographic factors. Between 2002 and 2004, Côte d'Ivoire saw a civil war, and between 2010 and 2011, there was a post-election conflict. These events have resulted in considerable political instability in the country. Young adults have experienced disruptions in their education and opportunities due to internal displacement caused by these conflicts. The nation still faces armed conflict and intercommunal tensions which harm young adults' prospects and general well-being. Côte d'Ivoire's young adults deal with a wide range of issues such as poor educational opportunities, unstable political and economic environments, and the effects of ongoing violence. In order to assure young adults' well-being and prospects for the future, addressing these issues will require comprehensive efforts centered on enhancing education, fostering economic development, maintaining political stability, and defending their rights.

**c. the FEDERAL REPUBLIC of SOMALIA**

The state of Somalia with political unrest and restricted access to essential amenities present particular difficulties for the country's youthful adult population. There are very few economic opportunities and the ongoing conflict has a destabilizing effect which may make adolescent population be more susceptible to being recruited by armed groups. The young adult population in Somalia is vital to its respective future but they also confront a wide range of serious obstacles. In order to promote peace social cohesion and economic prosperity to overcome these obstacles it is imperative that efforts be made to empower and assist these young adults.

**d. the UNITED STATES of AMERICA (the USA)**

Complex socioeconomic and environmental factors have an impact on the situation of young adults in the United States, especially when it comes to their involvement in gang or terrorist activities. A considerable part of the young adult population is impacted by or involved with gangs, which is indicated by the fact that 11% of middle and high school students nationwide report that there is gang activity in their institutions. The National Gang Center reports on incidents of gang violence in hospitals emphasizing the wider scale of gang activity and the necessity of safe management procedures for such situations. With their crowded population, big cities are the center of gang activity. Crimes involving guns, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and gang-related killings are among the serious and violent crimes that are often more common in these areas. It has been also

noted that gang membership among young adults is continuously growing since earlier in the new century. Gang activity has spread even outside of major cities demonstrating the seriousness of the matter. Youth can become more closely associated with gangs due to a variety of reasons including living in antisocial neighborhoods, not having parental supervision, as well as being exposed to witnessing armed conflict conducted by gangs that has become more and more prevalent in the country. The state of affairs concerning young adults in the USA who are involved in gang or terrorist activities is complex and preventive measures must give youth the tools they need to reject extremism as well as comprehensive approaches.

#### **e. CENTRAL AMERICA**

There are many difficulties and complexities facing the young adult population in Central America, especially in light of the continuous armed conflict or gang/terrorist activity. This region –particularly nations like El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala– has serious problems with gang violence which has reached proportions that are on par with armed conflict. There are many civilian casualties as well as effects on everyday life, freedom of movement and criminal activity beyond the scope of this violence. Numerous people have fled these regions in search of safer surroundings in Central America or further abroad, most notably the United States as a result of this situation, which has resulted in large migration flows and displacement. Central America has some of the highest homicide rates in the world and gang violence. Especially in El Salvador, this has become a serious concern. The deportation of gang members from the United States is one example of an external factor that has an impact on this violence in addition to internal dynamics. This deportation has helped these criminal organizations grow and become more powerful in Central America. An armed conflict-like struggle for territorial and population control has resulted from the existence of gangs. These groups frequently face off against state forces. Numerous communities are left impoverished and susceptible to gang recruitment, which is made worse by the absence of economic opportunities and the legacy of previous conflicts. In these areas, many young adults find gangs appealing because they provide a sense of belonging authority, and occasionally even financial security. The difficulty of tackling this issue is demonstrated by the criticism leveled at the governments' efforts to stop gang violence such as El Salvador's Mano Dura policy for their potential violations of human rights and repressive nature. There have been a number of strategies used in an attempt to lessen gang violence and its effects on the youth population from harsh measures to more subtle methods centered on better policing mediation and economic development.

#### **f. AFGHANISTAN**

In Afghanistan, the current political, economic, and social crises are closely linked to the circumstances facing the country's youth. Afghanistan's youth and young adults confront significant economic obstacles such as elevated rates of extreme poverty and joblessness. Young adults find it



challenging to obtain stable employment and enhance their economic situation due to the country's collateral crises which include political instability, conflict, and restricted education and healthcare services, especially for women. Young adults, again particularly women and girls, have been greatly impacted by the Taliban's takeover and the following restrictions on education. The young adults' futures are threatened by school closures and restrictions on their right of free speech, which could undo the gains made in education over the previous years.

#### **g. MIDDLE EAST**

The complexity of political instability, economic challenges, and social issues shapes the situation of young adults in the Middle East. Even though every nation has different problems, they are all affected by issues like youth unemployment, migration, and the desire for better opportunities. The ongoing conflict in Yemen which has resulted in widespread displacement and the collapse of the healthcare system presents enormous challenges to the country's young adult population. Due to the conflict, many young people are unable to attend school regularly. The circumstances led young women to now be more likely to get pregnant younger and get married as children which has worsened the poverty and social status of women. In Yemen, the situation for young adults is critical as the UN estimates that 80% of the population depends on aid to survive. Many young people in Syria have also been internally and externally displaced as a result of the civil war. Millions of Syrians sought safety in neighboring countries. The fighting has had a serious negative effect on education, causing many young people to drop out. The ongoing conflict and displacement have also raised the possibility of armed group recruitment and exploitation which has an impact on the safety and prospects of young adults. The aftermath of the Islamic States rule continued conflict and sectarian violence have all had an impact on Iraq's young adults. Although there have been security improvements in the nation, there are still issues such as high unemployment rates, especially among young men. Young adults have had some opportunities as a result of the reconstruction efforts after ISIS was defeated but the process is sluggish and many of them still live in unstable situations. Strong economic growth and rather high educational standards benefit Israel's young adult population. Nonetheless, there are particular social and political difficulties due to the continuing conflict in the Gaza district and the difficulties in integrating immigrants from different backgrounds. For young Israelis, concerns about things like military service, living expenses, and finding fulfilling work are important with the ongoing conflict. A sizable population of refugees many of whom are young people from Syria reside in Lebanon. Lebanon's young adults' access to work, healthcare and education has been impacted by the strain that the refugee crisis has placed on public services and infrastructure. These problems have been made worse by the political unrest and economic crisis which has resulted in high unemployment rates and a decline in the standard of living. Protests and calls for change have been triggered by the situation which reflects the dissatisfaction and hope for improvement among young adults as well as indicating the non-direct impact of conflict on youth.

## **F. Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict is engaged with the General Assembly, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations as well as regional organizations and bilateral contacts. The main purpose of this engagement is to expand the parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict as much as possible. Additionally, within years of hard work, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has put sanctions such as arms embargo, asset freezes, and travel bans on armed group members that committed violence or sexual abuse to young adults, as well as establishing monitoring and reporting mechanisms to enlist combatants/gang members that recruit child soldiers. The committee has also expanded the listing criteria to include attacks on schools or hospitals in conflict zones as well as violence and abuse of children. This public list which shows the location of whose names are written on it elevated public pressure on violators, in addition to giving access to UN officials to military installations in order to verify the presence or rescue of children, and it has resulted in the release of thousands of children. The UN has also cooperated with a number of international, regional, governmental, and non-governmental organizations to provide safeguards such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of children involved in armed groups.

## **G. Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events**

- a. Resolution 1612 adapted by UNSC, 2005
- b. Paris International Conference "Free Children from War", 2007
- c. Extensions to operations/sanctions adopted in the Resolution 1612, 2008 and 2011

## **H. Possible Solutions**

Advocacy, education, and direct intervention are the necessary components of a multifaceted approach which is in accordance with Machel's 10-Year Review to address the effects of armed conflict on young adults, especially in developing nations and marginalized communities.

- a. **Beginning Collaborative Efforts:** Engagement in dialogue and cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as United Nations Theme Groups at the local national and regional levels is critical. This involves organizing workshops, conferences, and focus groups to address the challenges that young adults face during and after conflicts.

- b. Encouraging Legislative Changes:** Encouraging the revision of laws to better shield individuals from violence and to stop it before it starts would be a fundamental measure. This involves advocating for stringent laws that prohibit human trafficking and the sex trade in countries where these offenses are being committed or transited. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) emphasizes the need for communication with non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in order to alleviate the suffering of those affected by armed conflict. In order to end or lessen victim suffering this entails promoting International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and other relevant standards.
- c. Humanitarian Engagement:** By allowing access, safety and support to people living in regions controlled by non-state armed groups (NSAGs), the effect of these issues may be eliminated. By permitting and facilitating these operations, states must collaborate. Programs targeted at keeping young adults out of armed groups in order to promote reintegration and prevention must be implemented. In order to inform young people about the dangers of joining armed groups, importance must be attributed to community outreach programs, awareness campaigns and education campaigns.
- d. Rehabilitation and Recovery:** Assistance in the rehabilitation and recovery of young adults who have been a part of armed groups is a necessary maneuver. With the help of reintegration programs, vocational training and psychological support, they can be reintegrated into the society.
- e. Boosting Community Capacity:** Families' and communities' capacity to create an environment that suits young adults' success must be strengthened and expanded. This means fostering social cohesion, increasing access to healthcare and education, and strengthening one's resilience.

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