



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

149th IPU Assembly

Geneva
13–17 October 2024



Assembly
Item 2

A/149/2-P.5-rev.2
15 October 2024

Consideration of requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda

Request for the inclusion of an emergency item in the agenda of the 149th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union submitted by the delegations of Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Guyana

On 13 October 2024, the IPU Secretary General received from the delegations of Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Guyana a request and accompanying documents for the inclusion in the agenda of the 149th Assembly of an emergency item entitled:

“Mobilizing parliamentarians for the protection of children in armed conflicts to avoid risks, suffering and consequences”.

Delegates to the 149th Assembly will find attached the text of the communication submitting the request ([Annex I](#)), as well as an explanatory memorandum ([Annex II](#)) and a draft resolution ([Annex III](#)) in support thereof.

The 149th Assembly will be required to take a decision on the request of the delegations of Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Guyana on Tuesday, 15 October 2024.

Under the terms of Assembly Rule 11.1, any Member of the IPU may request the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda. Such a request must be accompanied by a brief explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution, which clearly define the scope of the subject covered by the request. The IPU Secretariat shall communicate the request and any such documents immediately to all Members.

Furthermore, Assembly Rule 11.2 stipulates that:

- (a) A request for the inclusion of an emergency item must relate to a recent major situation of international concern on which urgent action by the international community is required and on which it is appropriate for the IPU to express its opinion and mobilize a parliamentary response. Such a request must receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in order to be accepted.
- (b) The Assembly may place only one emergency item on its agenda. Should several requests obtain the requisite majority, the one having received the largest number of positive votes shall be accepted.
- (c) The authors of two or more requests for the inclusion of an emergency item may combine their proposals to present a joint one, provided that each of the original proposals relates to the same subject.
- (d) The subject of a proposal that has been withdrawn by its authors or rejected by the Assembly cannot be included in the draft resolution submitted on the emergency item, unless it is clearly referred to in the request and title of the subject adopted by the Assembly.

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#IPU149

**COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO THE IPU SECRETARY GENERAL
BY THE DELEGATIONS OF ARGENTINA, CHILE, PERU, MEXICO, BRAZIL AND GUYANA**

13 October 2024

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

The National Congresses of Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Guyana intends to propose the following emergency item for inclusion in the agenda of the 149th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) scheduled from 13 to 17 October 2024 in Geneva.

The draft resolution along with the explanatory memorandum is attached with the request that the IPU Secretariat may circulate the same among the IPU Member Parliaments.

“Mobilizing parliamentarians for the protection of children in armed conflicts to avoid risks, suffering and consequences”.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

(signed) Congresswoman Margarita
Stolbizer
and Senator Lucila Crexell
National Congress of
Argentina

Senator Rojo Edwards
Senate of the Republic of
Chile

María del Carmen
Alva, Alex Paredes
and Wilson Soto
National Assembly of
the Republic of Peru

César Augusto Rendón
García, member of the
Chamber of Deputies of
Mexico

Claudio Cajado
Member of the Chamber
of Deputies of Brazil

Manzoor Nadir
Speaker of the
National Assembly
of Guyana

MOBILIZING PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICTS TO AVOID RISKS, SUFFERING AND CONSEQUENCES

Explanatory memorandum submitted by the delegations of Argentina, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Guyana

The proliferation of wars and the increase in violence as part of conflicts of various origins puts us in front of a high-risk escalation that does not seem to be stopped by the diplomatic route of the states or the action of multilateral organizations.

The damage that is done to people, to their rights, and to the territories is extremely serious and has immediate and medium-term impacts in time and space of enormous magnitude.

The IPU Assembly has already expressed itself before now in its permanent call for peace and the creation of conditions for international security.

On this occasion, we believe it is necessary and urgent to take a strong position and a call to action on the situation that children endure in armed conflicts or because of them.

Children are particularly vulnerable during armed conflicts, facing risks such as forced recruitment, sexual violence, displacement, loss of access to education and medical care, and in some cases even the suppression of identity when they are separated from their parents, family and community.

The psychological effects of war can be devastating, affecting their emotional and social development.

The violence and trauma experienced by children in conflict can have long-term effects on society, perpetuating cycles of violence and poverty. Disrupted education and loss of health care contribute to developmental problems in future generations.

Governments, parliaments, international organizations, and civil society must join forces to implement and enforce standards that protect children in conflict situations. Investment in programmes that address the immediate and long-term needs of children affected by conflict should be prioritized.

Regulatory Framework

- Four Geneva Conventions on the protection of victims of international armed conflicts (1949)
- Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions (1977)
- Customary international humanitarian law
- Safe Schools Declaration
- Paris Principles
- Vancouver Principles
- Regional and international standards on justice and accountability
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)
- Regional human rights instruments, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)
- ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999)
- UN Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005)

Major violations of children's rights in times of war:

- Recruitment and use of children
- Killing and mutilation
- Sexual violence
- Attacks on schools and hospitals or their use for military purposes
- Kidnapping
- Denial of humanitarian access
- Loss of parents and family members or separation from them
- Change of identity
- Displacement

Words from Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General

Children should never have to experience the horrific effects of conflict, but they continue to be killed and maimed, forced from their homes, and subjected to horrific abuse in war zones.

Child protection issues can be a good starting point for generating political will to resolve or mitigate conflict. Focusing mediation efforts on children, for example, can facilitate dialogue with parties to the conflict and thus increase the chances of achieving sustainable peace.

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

In situations of armed conflict, children are extremely vulnerable and suffer disproportionately from the consequences of wars they did not choose to start.

The protection afforded to children under international, regional, and national law is important in ensuring that parties to negotiations commit to respecting their obligations under these legal instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the four Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, and customary international human rights and humanitarian law.

Violence against children, including in armed conflict, has lifelong consequences for their health and well-being, as well as for their families, communities, and nations. Prolonged frustration resulting from abuse and injustice can worsen these consequences and permanently affect children throughout their development and adult life.

In most conflict-affected contexts, children under the age of 18 make up more than 50% of the total population and are also among the most vulnerable groups. Today's children are tomorrow's adults, and are often a key source of resilience, making them indispensable for reconstruction and economic development in countries emerging from conflict.

Guiding principles to facilitate consideration of child protection issues by mediators:

- No child should be discriminated against
- The best interests of the child in all decisions
- "Do no harm" principle
- Mediation principle: ensuring that the content and nature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and Security Council resolutions relating to children and armed conflict are respected

Child protection is the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation of and violence against children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most comprehensive compendium of the rights of all children and enshrines the non-derogable rights that all children have both in times of peace and

during armed conflict. Under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, States must ensure that no one under the age of 18 is compulsorily recruited into their armed forces, while armed groups other than the armed forces of a State must under no circumstances recruit or use in hostilities anyone under the age of 18.

International humanitarian law pays specific attention to children, as demonstrated by the fact that Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions, as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, prohibit the recruitment of children into armed forces or groups as a war crime in both international and other armed conflicts.

It is important to adopt an inclusive approach and involve community leaders to increase their knowledge of national and international law and to ensure that there is a common understanding among all parties involved on child protection and its relevance in the context at hand.

Including child protection issues in peace processes can lessen the transitional effects on children who are victims of armed conflict, while also providing a basis for developing prevention and accountability systems in the post-conflict period.

UNICEF

The situation of children in armed conflict is truly alarming. According to UNICEF, more than 266,000 grave violations have been committed against boys and girls in more than 30 conflict situations in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America since 2005. These children are victims of forced recruitment, sexual violence, kidnapping, and other abuses.

Effects of armed conflict on children

- Loss of innocence: Children are forced to participate in violence, which can lead to psychological and emotional trauma
- Displacement and family separation: Conflict can separate children from their families, leaving them homeless and without protection
- Limited access to education and health: Conflict can destroy educational and health infrastructure, leaving children without access to services

The report, entitled *25 Years of Armed Conflict and Children: Taking Action to Protect Children in War*, found that between 2005 and 2020, the following data have been verified: more than 104,100 children have been killed or maimed in situations of armed conflict; more than 93,000 children have been recruited and used by parties to the conflict; at least 25,700 children have been abducted; and parties to the conflict have raped, forcibly married, sexually exploited and committed other serious forms of sexual violence against at least 14,200 children. The United Nations verified more than 13,900 incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals and no fewer than 14,900 incidents of denial of humanitarian access to children since 2005. The report notes that many children suffer more than one rape, a factor that increases their vulnerability. For example, abduction is often combined with or a precursor to other violations, especially recruitment, use and sexual violence.

Children – especially girls – who have been abducted and/or associated with parties to the conflict are at high risk of becoming victims of sexual violence, including rape, sexual exploitation and forced marriage.

The rise in the number of non-state armed actors, the development and use of new means and methods of warfare, the use of improvised explosive devices and other explosive weapons, particularly in populated areas, are just some of the many factors that contribute to the emergence of serious new challenges that make it difficult to protect children in situations of armed conflict. Children have become the first-line target. This is a moral crisis of our time, and we cannot by any means consider it the "new normal."

PARTICULAR SITUATIONS:

Gaza, Haiti, Sudan, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

MOBILIZING PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICTS TO AVOID RISKS, SUFFERING AND CONSEQUENCES

Draft resolution submitted by the delegations of ARGENTINA, CHILE, PERU, MEXICO, BRAZIL and GUYANA

The 149th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

- (1) *Considering* that the proliferation of wars and the increase in violence as part of multiple conflicts of diverse origins are placing humanity in the face of a high-risk escalation that is impervious to the diplomatic channels of States and to the action of international organizations,
- (2) *Recognizing* that the damage caused to people, their rights and territories is extremely serious and produces impacts of enormous magnitude, both immediate and long-term and both in time and space,
- (3) *Recalling* that past IPU Assemblies have expressed a permanent call for peace regarding the urgent need to create adequate conditions for international security,
- (4) *Understanding* that on this occasion it is necessary and urgent to take a clear and strong position and make a call to action regarding the situation faced by children in armed conflicts or because of them,
- (5) *Reaffirming* that children are particularly vulnerable during armed conflict, facing risks such as forced recruitment, sexual violence, displacement, separation from their parents, family, and community, loss of access to education and health care, and in some cases, the suppression of their identity,
- (6) *Considering* that the psychological effects of war can be devastating, affecting the emotional and social development of children in a brutal and, in many cases, irreversible way,
- (7) *Aware* that violence and trauma experienced by children in conflicts of various origins, especially in armed conflict, can have long-term effects, perpetuating cycles of violence and poverty,
- (8) *Noting* that interrupted education and loss of health care contribute to developmental problems for both present and future generations,
- (9) *Urging* governments, parliaments and parliamentarians, international organizations, and civil society to join forces to implement and enforce standards that protect children in conflict situations,
- (10) *Emphasizing* the need to prioritize investment in programmes that address the immediate and long-term needs of children affected by conflict,
- (11) *Highlighting* the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 on the protection of victims of international armed conflict and their Additional Protocols (1977), customary international humanitarian law, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Safe Schools Declaration, the Paris Principles, the Vancouver Principles, and regional and international standards on justice and accountability,
- (12) *Highlighting also* the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of children in armed conflict (2000), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984), the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention of the International Labour Organization (1999), and UN Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), as well as regional human rights instruments, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998),

- (13) *Noting* that the main violations of children's rights in times of war are the recruitment and use of children for purposes that put them at risk, killing and mutilation, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals or their use for military purposes, kidnapping, denial of humanitarian access, loss of parents and family members or separation from them, change of identity and displacement, among other unacceptable violations of human rights,
- (14) *Recalling* the words of Antonio Guterres, current UN Secretary-General, that children should never have to experience the horrific effects of conflict, but still continue to be killed and maimed, forced from their homes and subjected to horrific abuse in war zones; that child protection issues can be a good starting point for generating the political will to resolve or mitigate conflict; and that focusing mediation efforts on children can facilitate dialogue with parties to the conflict and thus increase the chances of achieving sustainable peace,
- (15) *Taking into account* the opinion of specialized institutions in the field, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, which underscores that in situations of armed conflict, children are extremely vulnerable and suffer disproportionately the consequences of wars that they did not decide to start, and that the effective exercise of the protection that international, regional and national law grant to children is a priority and is important to ensure that the parties to negotiations commit to respect their obligations under legal instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the four Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, and customary international human rights and humanitarian law,
- (16) *Taking into account also* further considerations of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, that violence against children, including in armed conflict, has lifelong consequences for their health and well-being, as well as for their families, their communities and their nations; that prolonged frustration resulting from abuse and injustice can worsen these consequences and permanently affect children throughout their development and adult life; that in most conflict-affected contexts, children under 18 years of age constitute more than 50 per cent of the total population and are also among the most vulnerable groups; and that today's children are tomorrow's adults, and are often a key source of resilience, making them indispensable for reconstruction and economic development in countries emerging from conflict,
- (17) *Highlighting* the guiding principles to facilitate the consideration of child protection issues by mediators, including that no child should be discriminated against, prioritizing the best interests of children in all decisions, the principle of "do no harm", and the principle of mediation: it must be ensured that the content and nature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, and Security Council resolutions relating to children and armed conflicts are respected,
- (18) *Stressing* that "Child protection is the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation of and violence against children; and as such, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most comprehensive compendium of the rights of all children and enshrines the non-derogable rights of all children both in times of peace and during armed conflict." In the same vein, under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, States must ensure that no one under the age of 18 is compulsorily recruited into their armed forces, while armed groups other than the armed forces of a State must under no circumstances recruit or use in hostilities anyone under the age of 18,
- (19) *Noting* that it is important to adopt an inclusive approach and involve community leaders to increase their knowledge of national and international law and to ensure that there is a common understanding among all parties involved on child protection and its relevance in the context at hand,
- (20) *Understanding* that the inclusion of child protection issues in peace processes can lessen the effects of transition on children who are victims of armed conflict, while also providing a basis for the development of prevention and accountability systems in the post-conflict period,

(21) *Recognizing* that according to UNICEF, the situation of children in armed conflict is truly alarming; that more than 266,000 serious violations have been committed against boys and girls in more than 30 conflict situations in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America since 2005; that these children are victims of forced recruitment, sexual violence, kidnapping, and other abuses; that the effects of armed conflict on children are loss of innocence, as children are forced to participate in violence, which can cause psychological and emotional trauma, displacement and family separation, leaving them homeless and without protection, and with limited access to education and health; and that conflicts can destroy educational and health infrastructures, leaving children without access to services,

(22) *Recalling* the UNICEF report, *25 Years of Children and Armed Conflict: Taking Action to Protect Children in War*, which states that more than 104,100 children have been killed or maimed in situations of armed conflict, more than 93,000 children have been recruited and used by parties to conflict, at least 25,700 children have been abducted, and parties to conflicts have raped, forcibly married, sexually exploited and committed other serious forms of sexual violence against at least 14,200 girls and boys, and that the United Nations verified more than 13,900 incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals and no less than 14,900 incidents of denial of humanitarian access to children since 2005, and that in recent years the situation has worsened significantly,

(23) *Noting* that the UNICEF report states that many children experience more than one violation, a factor that increases their vulnerability; that abduction is often combined with other violations, especially recruitment, use, and sexual violence, or is a precursor to these other violations; and that children – especially girls – who have been abducted and/or associated with parties to the conflict are at high risk of falling victim to sexual violence, including rape, sexual exploitation and forced marriage,

(24) *Warning* that the rise in the number of non-state armed actors, the development and use of new means and methods of warfare, the use of improvised explosive devices and other explosive weapons, particularly in populated areas, are just some of the many factors contributing to the emergence of serious new problems that make it difficult to protect children in situations of armed conflict,

(25) *Underlining* that the UNICEF report concludes that children have become the frontline target in a moral crisis of our time, and that this cannot be considered the "new normal",

(26) *Denouncing* that aberrant acts such as those described above are currently occurring in many places around the world, with the most pressing cases in Gaza, Haiti, Sudan, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of),

(27) *Recognizing* the general situation that horribly affects children throughout the world, especially in these countries, and *emphasizing* the role of the IPU,

1. *Considers* that the proliferation of wars and the increase in violence as part of multiple conflicts of diverse origin constitutes one of the priorities to be addressed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and by the main institutions of global governance in force;
2. *Recognizes* that it is necessary and imperative that the IPU adopt a precise and strong position on the matter and make a call to action on the situation faced by the population of children in armed conflicts or because of them;
3. *Expresses concern* for the children whose human rights are currently being violated in Gaza, Haiti, Sudan, Ukraine, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and other parts of the world, as well as those who have suffered the violation of their rights in the recent and remote past;
4. *Calls upon* the parliaments and parliamentarians of the world to raise their voices in defence of the rights and guarantees of children around the world, regardless of their geographical location, nationality, sex, race, religion or any other distinctive characteristic; and to support, through concrete measures, actions for their due protection;

5. *Requests* the adoption by the IPU of an awareness-raising strategy on children in situations of or resulting from conflicts of all kinds, especially armed conflicts, aimed at government authorities and civil society in countries around the world;
6. *Encourages* the creation within the IPU of a working group made up of representatives of the different geopolitical groups, the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, so that together they can work on the preparation of a genuine diagnosis of the current situation and, as a result, the construction of an appropriate strategy to deploy parliamentary action;
7. *Urges* international organizations and governments around the world to prioritize attention to situations of risk for children in conflicts of all kinds, especially armed conflicts, giving preference to the current situation in Gaza, Haiti, Sudan, Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of);
8. *Requests* that humanitarian assistance mechanisms directed at children be strengthened and that relations of cooperation and mutual assistance between the IPU and international organizations be reinforced, especially with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, including, among other actions, the adoption of measures specifically aimed at achieving a higher level of commitment, efficiency and effectiveness on the part of national parliaments around the world, in particular in terms of legislation, legislative control, budget allocations for addressing the problem and parliamentary diplomacy.