



VANCOUVER PRINCIPLES

ON PEACEKEEPING AND THE
PREVENTION OF THE RECRUITMENT
AND USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

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Vancouver Principles on peacekeeping and the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers

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We, the Member States endorsing the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers,

Deeply concerned by the widespread recruitment and use of children in situations of armed conflict by armed forces and armed groups, including as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies, or for sexual purposes, as well as other Grave Violations against children in situations of armed conflict,

Reiterating our strong commitment to the protection of children affected by armed conflict and to ending and preventing Grave Violations against children,

Recognizing that the recruitment and use of children are prevalent in areas of contemporary peacekeeping operations, and recalling that peacekeeping can play a role in preventing Grave Violations against children in armed conflict,

Recognizing the important steps taken by the United Nations, Member States, civil society, and other relevant actors to address the recruitment and use of child soldiers,

Recalling United Nations Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2013), 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011), 2068 (2012), 2143 (2014), and 2225 (2015).

Building upon the success of the Paris Principles on their 10th anniversary and seeking to further articulate their guidance to the peacekeeping context,

Emphasizing the need to prioritize and operationalize the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers in areas of operation of peacekeeping, noting the critical role of such prevention to the achievement of peace and security, and taking into account the differential impact of conflict on girls and boys,

Hereby pledge:

Mandates

1. To strongly encourage the inclusion of appropriate child protection provisions, including the prevention of recruitment and use of child soldiers, in all United Nations peacekeeping mandates, including for regional peacekeeping operations,

Planning

2. To prioritize the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers in the strategic and operational planning of all peacekeeping operations,

Early warning

3. To support United Nations efforts to monitor, report, identify, and address early warning signs of the recruitment and use of child soldiers, recognizing that such acts can amount to war crimes and can be a precursor of other war crimes, including attacks on civilians and civilian objects, crimes against humanity, and genocide,

Child protection focal points

4. To appoint child protection focal points throughout our mission command structures, both military and police, to support the development of a common international standard endorsed by participating nations and the United Nations for training and certification of such focal points, and to enable and encourage active communication, coordination, and cooperation between such focal points and civilian Child Protection Advisors as well as other child protection actors,

Training

5. To ensure that all our peacekeepers receive training on child protection prior to their deployment to peacekeeping operations and to integrate the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as clear guidance regarding interactions with children associated with armed forces or armed groups, within our peacekeepers' training, education, and doctrine to a common agreed international standard endorsed by the United Nations, and to undertake regular reviews of such training and doctrine to ensure its effectiveness,

Monitoring and reporting

6. To take steps to ensure our peacekeepers report incidents of Grave Violations against children in situations of armed conflict, including the recruitment and use of children, to United Nations Child Protection Advisers or through the appropriate channels established in peacekeeping operations, and to include such monitoring and accountability measures within our national mission mandate and peacekeeping training,

Protection and care of children

7. To take proactive measures to ensure that all children, including those associated with armed forces and armed groups, who come into contact with our peacekeepers during peacekeeping operations are treated in accordance with international humanitarian law and applicable international human rights law, with special consideration of their status as children, and are protected against violations of international humanitarian law and applicable international human rights law, and that any requirements for the care and aid of such children are appropriately addressed and communicated to Heads of Missions and the military chain of command in the most expeditious manner possible in the circumstances,

Prevention

8. To act effectively in response to credible information, and where authorized by the mission mandate and our rules of engagement, to protect children at risk of recruitment or use as child soldiers and other Grave Violations,

Detention

9. To ensure that all children apprehended and/or temporarily detained in accordance with mission-specific military rules of engagement are treated in a manner consistent with international norms and standards, as well as the special status, needs, and rights of children and to ensure that detention is used as a measure of last resort, for the shortest possible period of time, and with the best interests of the child as a primary consideration, and that they are handed over expeditiously to child protection actors and civilian authorities in line with the established policies and guidance,

Conduct and discipline

10. To hold our own personnel to the highest standard of conduct, and to vigorously and transparently investigate and prosecute, where appropriate and in accordance with applicable national law, or otherwise fully cooperate with the competent authority, any incidents of alleged abuse against children— including sexual exploitation and abuse – by our peacekeepers,

Contribution of women

11. To recognize the essential contribution of women to peacekeeping operational effectiveness, and the distinct and critical roles of both men and women in the protection of children and the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers,

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)

12. To ensure that child soldiers are included as a priority in the planning and execution of all United Nations supported disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and, where appropriate, repatriation efforts, taking into account their specific needs, including those based on gender, age, and other identity factors, to assist in their successful transition to normal life, and to prevent their re-recruitment,

Mental health

13. To actively promote and support research on the trauma experienced by personnel confronting child soldiers and interacting with children affected by armed conflict, and to provide appropriate pre-deployment preparation, as well as mental health support during and post-deployment,

Peace processes

14. To support the inclusion of child protection provisions within the terms of peace processes, peace agreements, and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts, noting the unique vulnerability and protection needs of children, the importance of their rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities, and the urgent need to prevent and end the recruitment and use of child soldiers to achieve lasting and sustainable peace,

Sanctions

15. To support the inclusion of child recruitment and use as a designation criterion in United Nations sanctions regimes aimed at supporting the political settlement of conflicts in the context of peace operations,

Best practices

16. To share with other Member States and the United Nations best practices and lessons learned on the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers in the context of peacekeeping,

Further guidance

17. And in this regard look forward to the development, in consultation with Member States, the United Nations, and child protection actors, of operational guidance for the implementation of these Principles.