

GA

General Assambly



“Eradication of child labor in
global production chains”

BACKGROUND GUIDE





Dear delegates,

I am thrilled to welcome you to General Assembly in the LASALLECUNMUN26. I am very excited to see how you will develop as a delegation within the model. My name is Astrid Azul Tavera Bullon, and it is a pleasure and an honor to be your President this year. Our chair is composed of Renata Quintanilla as our Moderator and Yareli Dzul as our Conference Officer. As we have been delegates before, we will give you our best to ensure you enjoy this model.

I am currently 18 years old, and I am in my fifth semester of high school at Universidad La Salle Cancun, in Chemical-Biological Sciences. Initially, I chose this area because I wanted to study psychology, as I always enjoyed how emotions or traumas showed up in our behavior and how we interacted with others. Even though, as I was studying anatomy and physiology, I started to love this area and found it very fascinating how each part of the human body worked together. Currently, I am preparing to study medicine, and hopefully to develop myself in a foreign country after finishing my medical internship. Leaving all the formality, let me introduce my true self. I have always been super energetic and have engaged in different hobbies such as swimming, ballet, cheerleading, basketball, and piano. Currently, I have started running to release all the school stress. I enjoy listening to Taylor Swift and paying attention to each of her lyrics as she is very expressive. I also love rom-coms and always come back to them, especially with “10 Things I Hate About You”, I enjoy all the enemies-to-lovers dramas. I have participated as a delegate twice, and last year I was part of the chair as the moderator in the COPUOS committee. Since I met MUN, I have always loved that we discuss topics from all over the world, which lets us explore the reality from other nations, to be more empathetic, to expand our perspective, and to develop the capacity of solving problems being realistic.

I know you might be intimidated about what you may have heard about MUN, but don't worry I know that during the debate, you will be gaining confidence and passion for the model just as we have. I encourage you to challenge yourself and to build skills of critical thinking, and to be realistic with your arguments. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the committee.

Best wishes to all of you,

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COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

Since its conception in 1946, the General Assembly has been the main policy-making organ of the United Nations. It discusses specific issues that lead to resolutions or recommendations. Each member of the organ is represented and allowed to vote. The UN General Assembly is dedicated to admitting the non-permanent members of the Security Council, approving the UN budget, and peace and security issues.

Topic: “Eradication of child labour in global production chains.”

INTRODUCTION

Child labor is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and can result in negative consequences in their physical, mental, psychological, and social development, and can also lead to death. These result in a violation of international human rights and labour rights laws and standards. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), child labor makes it difficult for children to attend school, reducing future job opportunities and income inequality.

Child labor mostly affects children in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America, and the Caribbean, with nearly two-thirds of all children in child labor. In many cases, poverty and migration have driven children to work to support themselves or their families. Families that are far below the living wage standards for an average family struggle to pay for proper healthcare, food, and education for their children. It is estimated that 138 million children were engaged in child labour in 2024.

Without realizing it, several daily products we consume might be produced, manufactured, and transported by children whose rights are violated. Many global chains consider children easier to control and pay them less, in contrast with adults.

Although global chains may adopt a “zero tolerance” towards child labour, there are still numerous cases in their operations, since they don’t take action to reveal them. Moreover, most child labour cases are hidden. Cases of child labour are more common in the sectors of agriculture, mining, and textiles, with children below 10 years old working longer hours without any job security or social protection for short-term work, since these industries rely on informal labour.

Nevertheless, child labour not only affects the lives of children, but children have also manufactured their purchased products from suppliers and business partners. Additionally, child labour contributes to the decline of the skilled workforce, because of the pressure for low costs and fast delivery.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Child labour has been common since prehistoric times, but the growth of the Industrial Revolution and economic and technological development increased the demand for manufacturing and farm mechanization, with Great Britain and the United States having the main development. The British population grew rapidly, due to changes in agriculture. Part of this growing population migrated to the cities and formed the mass of industrial workers. This globalization disrupted the lives of workers and their families, leading children below four years old to work in mines, farm labour, and handicrafts to increase their income. In cases where the father died, children were driven to start a job to take responsibility for their mothers and siblings. As a result of their duty, children were compensated with an improved status. Children from rural areas were sent to factories in cities separated from their families, poor children were taken from towns to rural areas, only allowing boys to leave until 21 years old, and in the case of girls, marriage (BBC, 2023). Working between 11 and 16 working hours in hazardous conditions and wages lower than adult males' pay (World Vision, 2022).

Studies such as the Report of the Sadler Committee in 1831, described the working environment "In certain establishments, rarely an hour goes by without hearing the screams that the beatings elicit from the children; it also often happens that a child overcome by sleep slips under the machine and is maimed for life." (ENGLAND, 1831). Additionally, studies from Durham University revealed that children working in workshops had vitamin C deficiency, respiratory diseases, and because of poor nutrition, they had low height. In addition, due to the extremely noisy machinery, children developed hearing issues.

The rapid development of large-scale manufacturing led to workers demanding through strikes improvements in workers' living conditions. Moreover, the exploitation of young children in mining and industrial work, caused indignation and outrage throughout society, which led to the beginning of the regulation of child labour in Great Britain at the end of the 18th century (Britannica, 2025). Furthermore, many European countries established regulations on the schedules of the working hours and children's minimum age, with Germany being the first country to ban child labour lower than 12 years old with the command to give them 3 hours daily in school with the Social Law, in 1853 (BBC Bitesize, 2025).

In the United States, because of middle-class organizations demanding legislation to regulate child labor, the National Consumers' League in 1899 and the National Child Labor Committee in 1904 were created to eliminate child labour. Furthermore, these committees pioneered the usage of mass political action, including expert investigation, photography, pamphlets, leaflets, mass mailings, and lobbying (Social Welfare History Project, 2011). Leading to the U.S. Fair Labour Standards Act, which restricted the working hours and types of jobs for children under age 16. Moreover, international efforts to regulate child labour started with the International Labour Conference in 1890. Founded in 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) considered the abolition of child labour as one of its main objectives, through the supervision of labour laws, stating minimum age for employment

shall not be less than the age at which compulsory schooling ends. It was not until 1973 that 172 countries established the minimum age for employment through the Minimum Age Convention, followed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guaranteed the protection of children. Finally, in 1992, The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), was consolidated with The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention in 1999, the elimination of child labour by providing support to countries in their efforts (World Vision, 2022).

CURRENT SITUATION

Despite international efforts to eradicate child labour, it is estimated that 138 million children are still working in hazardous conditions for the same reason, poverty, with Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and South America showing the highest prevalence. Although, child labour has been reduced from 246 million to 138 million children, the world has not achieved the global eradication target for 2025. Child labour makes impossible to attend classes. Even if children attend “public” schools, it is expensive for a poor family to afford books and uniforms, and these schools do not ensure future benefits (ILO, UNICEF, 2025). Between 2016 and 2021, child labour experienced an increase of 160 million children, which also rose because of the COVID-19 pandemic, due to new economic crises and the closure of educational institutions, leading children to work longer hours in dangerous conditions, in contrast with the downward trend between 2000 and 2016. As a result of the growth of child labour in the pandemic, the ILO estimated in the “Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward” that the number would increase by 46 million children at the end of 2022. The increase in population, crisis, extreme poverty and inadequate social protection measures, caused the rise of 16.6 million children working in Sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, would have happened in the poorest countries in Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean if social protection would not be covered (UNICEF, 2021). At the end of the report, the ILO and UNICEF recommended the promotion of universal social protection, increased investment in education, the promotion of decent employment, the elimination of harmful gender norms, and the strengthening of child protection systems in supply chains.

The agriculture sector accounts for 70% children in child labour, followed by 20% in services and 10% in industry. Child labour is more prevalent among boys than girls at every age. The prevalence of child labour in rural areas (14%) is close to three times higher than in urban areas (5%) (ILO, 2021). Because of children dropping out of school, it contributes to a limitation in future jobs and economic growth, increasing the risk of income inequality over generations, which would affect their mental and physical development.

On the contrary, due to developments over the past few decades, many supply chains have become more abusive with the people who work with them, as corporate profits are prioritized. Moreover, fast fashion has also triggered an increase of child labour, with 1.78

million children in Bangladesh working long hours in the textile industry. In addition, cases of child labour are increasing in developed countries because of weak regulations on child labour, climate change, war, labour shortages, and migration (undocumented migrants), which not only affects children directly, but also their families, as they struggle to get basic services, leading children to work to survive.

As mentioned before, if a company employs children, it might face reputational damage due to the violation of international human rights laws and standards, therefore, they must approach regulations across regions (BSR, 2023). In the case of partnerships, as many suppliers are distributed in various regions where inspection is weakest, child labour is more prevalent. Amnesty International has reported that global food firms profit from children between 8 to 14 years old harvesting palm fruit in Indonesia, stating “Companies are turning a blind eye to exploitation of workers in their supply chain.” In contrast, these offenses are crimes are punishable by law, are weak, and companies hide behind false promises of “sustainable” and only paper policies, with children carrying sacks of 12 to 25kg, close to toxic chemicals, without any safety equipment (Amnesty International, 2016).

UNICEF and the ILO have partnered with businesses, industries, and governments to prevent and address causes and response services of child labour in global supply chains, to promote responsible and business action on the impact of children’s rights. Nevertheless, if governments fail to act, the number of children in hazardous work could reach 160 million by 2030 (UNICEF, 2021).

COUNTRY BOX

Argentine Republic

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Federal Republic of Germany

Federative Republic of Brazil

French Republic

Great Britain

People's Republic of China

Republic of Haiti

Republic of Honduras

Republic of India

Republic of Indonesia

Republic of Nigeria

Republic of Sierra Leone

Republic of Singapore

Republic of the Sudan

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam

United Mexican States

United States of America

GUIDED QUESTIONS

- I. Which measures are being taken to strengthen the protection of children in poverty?
- II. Do companies comply with national and international measurements to prevent child labour in their supply chains?
- III. Which industries take advantage of child labour in your delegation?
- IV. Has there been any progress in the efforts to eradicate child labour in your delegation?
- V. How could your delegation reinforce strengthen the action to eliminate child labour

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