

**WHAT** is



**SECURITY COUNCIL**

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Project Manager: Monica Lindvall

Author: Alana Kapell

Designer/Art Director: Jason Robinson, PlanetYou

Illustrator: Qin Cheng

Contributors: Cristina Barbaglia, Bill Bell, Ines Biemmi, Gorel Bogarde, Roberta Cecchetti, Stefanie Conrad, Santiago Davila, Clare Feinstein, Anita Goh, Hannah Lyford Jones, Lena Karlsson, Claire O’Kane, Monica Lindvall, Anne-Sophie Lois, Carmen Madrinan, Sara Philipson, Linda Raftree, Gina Solari, Lene Steffen, Samia Kassid, Annabel Trapp, Ann-Kristin Vervik, Silje Vold

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The “What is...” leaflets have been developed to support the learning and education of children and adolescents. We gratefully acknowledge the existing resources that supported the development of this material. Some of the content found in the “What is...” leaflets was adapted or taken directly from a variety of sources, including: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org); [www.un.org](http://www.un.org); <http://treaties.un.org>; [www.cyberschoolbus.un.org](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org); Child Rights Information Network, Guide to Mechanisms for Children’s Rights. England; Child Rights Information Network, 2008. [http://www.crin.org/law/mechanisms\\_index.asp](http://www.crin.org/law/mechanisms_index.asp)

**WHAT** is **?**

## **Security Council**

Dear Reader,

Every year, the United Nations (UN) makes important decisions that affect and impact the lives of children and young people around the world. In 2009, there was a special focus on a child's right: 'to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting him or her' – or, in other words, children's participation.

We saw this as an opportunity to support children's understanding of not only the UN but also other important processes where children's rights are discussed at international, regional and local levels. We hope that this will encourage and support children and young people to get involved in these processes.

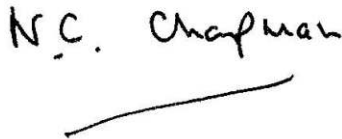
The 'WHAT IS?' leaflets are only one way for you to learn and build a greater understanding and awareness about some of the things that happen at the global/international level. You have a very important role to play in the decisions and processes that affect your life.

This information may be most useful to adults that work with children, teachers, older children, adolescents, youth and young people that are considering ways to get involved in and to influence international or UN related processes.

As needed or requested – we hope to add more leaflets and build on the information that is available to you. As a starting point, we have developed the following leaflets:

- Children's Participation
- The United Nations
- The UN General Assembly
- A Convention and a Treaty
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Special Representative
- The Omnibus Resolution
- The Security Council
- The Complaints Procedure for the CRC

Your voice, your experiences and your opinions matter and count! Our hope is that the information found in the 'WHAT IS?' series will support you to learn, create positive change, speak out, take action and have your voice heard.

Handwritten signature of Nigel Chapman in black ink, consisting of the initials 'N.C.' followed by the name 'Chapman' and a long horizontal stroke underneath.

Nigel Chapman  
CEO, Plan International

Handwritten signature of Mark Vogt in black ink, appearing as a stylized, cursive 'M. Vogt'.

Mark Vogt  
Director of War Child Holland

Handwritten signature of Elisabeth Dahlin in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Elisabeth Dahlin, Secretary General  
Save the Children Sweden

## What is the Security Council?

First, we need to look at the United Nations (UN) and how it is structured...

The UN is a huge international body made up of many different organs, programs, agencies and committees.

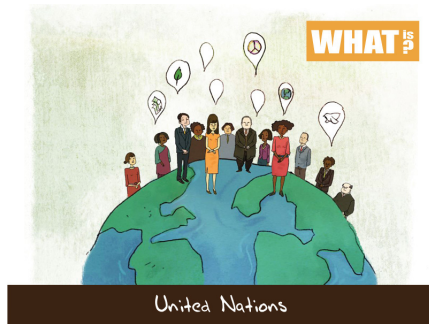
There are six main organs of the United Nations:

1. The General Assembly
2. **The Security Council**
3. The International Court of Justice
4. The Trusteeship Council
5. The Economic and Social Council
6. The Secretariat

Each organ has its own structure, membership, goals and ways of working.

For more information about the United Nations or the General Assembly, please see:

What is the United Nations?



What is the General Assembly?



## The United Nations Security Council

The Security Council's main responsibility is to maintain international peace and security.

Once the Security Council is aware that a threat to peace exists, their first action is often to make recommendations and find ways to reach a peaceful agreement. At times, the Council itself will investigate and try to help solve the problems, sometimes this is done by appointing a 'special representative'.



For more information, please see, [What is a Special Representative?](#)

When a problem leads to fighting, the Council's first concern is to end it as soon as possible. Many times the Council issues 'cease fire directives' or, in other words, calls on everyone who is fighting to stop so that discussions for a peaceful resolution can take place.

The Security Council can also make the decision to send 'United Nations Peacekeeping Forces' to troubled areas. Their primary responsibility is to maintain ceasefires and stabilize situations so that peaceful solutions can be found.

The Security Council has five permanent members:

1. China
2. France
3. The Russian Federation
4. The United Kingdom
5. The United States



There are ten additional members who are elected by the General Assembly for a two year term.

The current ten non-permanent members (and their end of term date) are as follows:

- |                                  |                   |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Austria (2010)                | 6. Lebanon (2011) |
| 2. Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011) | 7. Mexico (2010)  |
| 3. Brazil (2011)                 | 8. Nigeria (2011) |
| 4. Gabon (2011)                  | 9. Turkey (2010)  |
| 5. Japan (2010)                  | 10. Uganda (2010) |

In addition to the above structure, the Security Council also has 'Standing Committees', 'Ad Hoc Committees', 'Working Groups' and more that all have specific areas of focus and ways of working.

For more information, please visit: [http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc\\_structure.html](http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_structure.html)



## Children's Rights and the Security Council

Since 1999, the Security Council has had a stronger focus on children in armed conflict. As a result, there have been more and more opportunities and actions taken to better protect children.

A few examples include:

In 2001 (Resolution 1379) the Security Council asked the Secretary-General to list/name the countries or groups that violate international standards on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, or, in other words, countries or groups that are breaking the promises made to prevent children from serving in armed forces or groups. Lists of all these countries or groups are included in the Secretary General's annual report and are often referred to as "Annex 1 and Annex 2".

In 2003 (Resolution 1460) the Council asked countries or groups listed in these annexes to create 'Action Plans' for ending the recruitment and use of children. Action Plans are a way for countries to take meaningful steps to fulfill their promises to children.

In 2005 (Resolution 1612) the Security Council called for a process to monitor and report on very serious child rights violations, including:

1. Killing or maiming of children;
2. Recruitment or use of children as soldiers;
3. Rape and other grave sexual abuse of children.
4. Abduction of children;
5. Attacks against schools or hospitals;
6. Denial of humanitarian access for children;

These reports provide opportunities for action and put pressure on countries or groups to stop violations against children.

Also created in 2005 was the 'Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict' which is a group of experts (from the 15 member states in the Security Council) focusing on children in conflict.

In 2009 (Resolution 1882) the Council chose sexual violence and killing and maiming of children as critical priorities. It has called on counties involved in armed conflict to prepare and implement action plans to address these violations.



## Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

The Working Group was established in 2005 and works with the Security Council:

- To review reports that include information about the monitoring of violations, including country reports. By September 2009 the Working Group had looked at 27 country reports and made recommendations for each
- To look at the progress that is being made to develop and implement action plans
- To make recommendations on the actions needed to protect children affected by armed conflict



For example:

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government brought to trial former Mai-Mai Commander Kyungu Mutanga, for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the recruitment of 300 children in Katanga Province from 2003 to 2006. This action followed strong recommendations by the Working Group to take appropriate legal measures against members of armed groups accused of grave crimes against children.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup><http://www.un.org/children/conflict/english/securitycouncilwg.html>

The actions taken by the Security Council have created real results for children. Action Plans have helped to identify and release children from fighting forces and have helped prevent further recruitment. Thousands of children connected to armed groups have been released. Special actions and decisions to better protect children have been included in peace agreements and some UN peacekeeping missions.

By working together, the Security Council, the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, UNICEF, Non-governmental organizations and other UN agencies have created positive change for children affected by war, including child soldiers.

## What Now?

What did I learn from this leaflet?

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What questions do I have and where might I find the answers?

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How can I use this information and are there any actions I want to take after reading this leaflet?

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Who do I know that might be interested in learning more about the Security Council and what can I do to help them?

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