

# WHAT is



A SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

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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 ?

## **A Special Representative**

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.

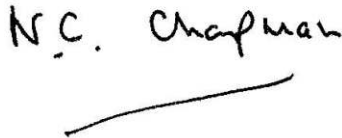
The 'WHAT IS?' leaflets are only one way for you to learn and build a greater understanding and awareness about some of the things that happen at the global/international level. You have a very important role to play in the decisions and processes that affect your life.

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 a Special Representative?

There are times, within the United Nations (or the world), that an issue or situation requires special attention. For example: countries that are affected by war or an issue like HIV/AIDS may require the UN to take special actions. In some cases, the Secretary General (or the head of the UN) may decide to appoint a 'Special Representative'. Sometimes a Special Representative can also be appointed for a country situation or for a global theme.

Some examples of Special Representatives include:

- Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Sudan
- Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq
- Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Migration
- Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders

For a list of all Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, please visit:

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/SRSG/table.htm>





Special Note – In addition to ‘Special Representatives’, the UN also has:

Special Advisors; Special Rapporteurs; Special Envoys; Personal Representatives and more.

The mandate of all these positions can be quite similar. The specific details of each position can be found in the Resolution that created the position.

Each Special Representative of the Secretary-General (‘Special Representative’ for short) will have his/her own goals and objectives – also known as a ‘mandate’. In general, a Special Representative’s mandate may include:

- Gathering information and research to understand the issue in detail
- Meeting with people, governments, partners, organizations and others to understand concerns and explore solutions
- Providing recommendations and actions needed to make the situation better

Special Representatives usually focus on human rights violations and ways to increase the protection of victims and promote their rights.

Special Representatives do not represent any one country, organization or group. This allows them the opportunity to freely say what the problems are and what actions are needed.

Special Representatives usually report to the General Assembly and other UN Bodies once a year. Reports and recommendations made by the Special Representatives can often shape future resolutions, declarations and other decisions made by the General Assembly or other UN bodies.

Every Special Representative should look at how their area of focus affects both adults and children. However, there are two Special Representatives that are especially designed for children:

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

**Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
on Violence against Children**

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

In 1993 (Resolution 48/157) the General Assembly decided to appoint an expert to study the issue of children affected by armed conflict. The goal was to look at ways to protect children from armed conflict and to develop a set of recommendations for future action.

In 1996, Ms. Graça Machel (the expert) submitted her study to the General Assembly, entitled: 'Impact of Armed Conflict on Children'. (this report is also widely known as the 'Machel Study'.)



To ensure a follow-up to her recommendations, the General Assembly decided to create a 'Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict' and in 1997, the Secretary General appointed Mr. Olara A Otunnu as his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

In April 2006, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy was the second to assume the position.

The Mission Statement for the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is:

“To promote and protect the rights of all children affected by armed conflict”

Some of the Special Representative's roles and responsibilities include:

- To be an advocate for boys and girls who are affected by armed conflict
- To support and increase the protection and well-being of boys and girls affected by armed conflict
- To work with partners and to explore ideas and ways to protect children affected by armed conflict
- To build awareness and understanding

Throughout the year, the Office of the Special Representative will make statements, release reports, and issue press releases relating to children and armed conflict.

In 2007 a report entitled 'Will You Listen?' was released. It pulled together the views and recommendations of 1,700 children and young people in 92 countries. Many of the children had been directly affected by armed conflict and were provided an opportunity to speak about how their own lives had been affected.

To read the full report, please visit:

<http://www.un.org/children/conflict/english/theyouthreport.html>

For more information about the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict please visit:

<http://www.un.org/children/english/index.html>



## Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children

Recognizing that not enough is being done to protect children from violence, an international initiative (or study) was started in 2004. This initiative was called the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children.

This Study was conducted over two years (2004-2006) and helped governments, organizations, and researchers – including young people – learn and better understand:

- The causes of violence and how different types of violence can affect girls and boys around the world
- Good ways of preventing violence and helping children who have faced violence
- What governments, international organisations, communities and parents can do to prevent and respond to violence against children
- What children can do to better protect themselves from violence

Professor Paulo Pinheiro was appointed as an independent Expert to conduct the Study.

The Study looked at violence against children and the places where violence happens, including:

1. Home and family
2. Schools and other educational settings
3. Institutions and prisons
4. The workplace
5. The community

The Study concluded that no form of violence is justifiable and all forms of violence are preventable. It also made recommendations based on research findings and consultations with adults and children.

Children and young people played an important role throughout the Study. At the local, national, regional and international levels they were sharing their opinions, experiences and recommendations related to violence. Their participation greatly shaped the Study's final report and recommendations, including the recommendation to have a Special Representative

In November 2007, responding to one of the Study recommendations, and recognising the need to continue to work in this field, the United Nations General Assembly asked the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on Violence against Children (Resolution 62/141).

In May 2009 the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced that Marta Santos Pais would be his Special Representative on Violence against Children.



To promote implementation of the recommendations of the Study, the Special Representative will work closely with other United Nations bodies, governments and many other partners, especially those focusing on children, to identify and share good practices and to promote actions at the national, regional and international level to prevent and address violence against children.

The Special Representative will also promote the involvement of children and young people in initiatives to prevent and address violence against children.

For the complete list of responsibilities, please visit: <http://www.un.org/ga/62/resolutions.shtml>

## Looking for more information?



### Our Right to be Protected from Violence: Activities for Learning and Taking Action for Children and Young People

This book gives you more information about the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. It also lists various activities that can be used to learn about issues of violence against children and it provides you with some ideas for taking action. [www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org)

### United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children – Adapted for Children and Young People

A child friendly summary of the official UN Study report and recommendations, including a useful word bank that can help to explain some of the language you come across when reading or talking about the issue of violence against children. [www.bookshop.rb.se](http://www.bookshop.rb.se)

## ACTION: Children's Actions to End Violence against Children

A Film by Save the Children for the UN Study on Violence against Children. It can be ordered free of charge by sending an e-mail to: [info@rb.se](mailto:info@rb.se) use the code number 3371. Or it can be downloaded from: [www.rb.se/eng](http://www.rb.se/eng).

## Safe You & Safe Me

A resource for younger children, 7-12 years of age, to learn and understand about the types of violence faced by children throughout the world and to give you some ideas on how you can protect yourself from violence. [www.bookshop.rb.se](http://www.bookshop.rb.se)

## Equal You & Equal Me

A sequel to 'Safe You & Safe Me', this resource supports younger children to better understand discrimination including: discrimination against children with disabilities; minority children and more. The resource includes learning activities and other useful information. [www.bookshop.rb.se](http://www.bookshop.rb.se)

## UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children - official website

Please visit the UN Study's official website for up to date information, resources in different languages and lots more information: <http://www.violencestudy.org/r25>

## 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 Special Representatives and what can I do to help them?

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