



# Office of the President of the General Assembly 79<sup>th</sup> Session



## Informal interactive dialogue on Childhood with dignity: Eliminating child labour in all its forms, including forced recruitment and use of children in armed conflict

Tuesday, 13 May 2025

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York

### CONCEPT NOTE

#### Background

Significant progress has been made to tackle child labour. While there are nearly 86 million fewer children in child labour since we began measuring global levels in 2000, recent trends suggest that we are far behind on the collective commitment to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. Approximately 160 million children worldwide continue to suffer the consequences of child labour<sup>1</sup>, almost 1 in 10 children globally and 1 in 4 in Sub-Saharan Africa. Child labour is most often found within families who rely on their children's work to meet basic needs. Approximately 70 per cent occurs in the agricultural sector. Children in rural areas are three times as likely to be in child labour as those in urban areas.

Child labour is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

The worst forms of child labour include slavery and similar practices, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, trafficking of children, illicit activities and hazardous work.

Child labour is frequently associated with children being out of school. A large share of younger children in child labour are excluded from school despite falling within the age range for compulsory education. More than a quarter of children ages 5 to 11 and over a third of children ages 12 to 14 who are in child labour are out of school, which severely constrains their prospects for decent work and life potential overall.

In accordance with the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, as amended in 2022, and two fundamental ILO Conventions on child labour, namely, Convention No.138 on Minimum Age and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, ILO member States have an obligation to respect, promote and realize the abolition of child labour, even if they have not ratified the Conventions concerned.

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<sup>1</sup> See: International Labour Office and United Nations Children's Fund, Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward, ILO and UNICEF, New York, 2021

The aim of ILO Convention No.138 is the effective abolition of child labour by requiring countries to establish a minimum age for entry into work or employment as well as national policies for the elimination of child labour. ILO Convention No. 182, which achieved universal ratification in 2020, helped to focus the international spotlight on the urgency of action to eliminate, as a priority, the worst forms of child labour including those that may expose children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse without losing sight of the long-term goal of the effective elimination of all child labour. The supervisory mechanism of the ILO reviews member States' implementation of these Conventions and plays a key role in promoting effective action.

Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires Member States to take immediate and effective measures aiming at the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

While most countries have adopted legislation to prohibit or place severe restrictions on the employment and work of children, child labour continues to exist on a massive scale, sometimes in appalling conditions. The world is not on track to eliminate child labour in line with SDG Target 8.7 as millions of children worldwide continue to be affected by it. There is an urgent need for increased action to accelerate progress in eliminating all forms of child labour as reiterated by Member States in the Pact for the Future and accelerate progress towards achieving SDG Target 8.7.

In the Pact for the Future, Member States also reaffirmed their commitment to ensure that decision-making and policymaking today takes greater account of the needs and interests of the generations to come, and that they are balanced with the needs and interests of current generations. In the Pact for the Future, which envisages to invest in the social and economic development of children, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to ensure equitable access to essential services for all children, especially health, education and social protection. They also committed to intensify efforts to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and eliminate all forms of child labour.

It is therefore imperative that the international community work closer together to address the root causes of child labour and integrate child labour issues in education, social protection, employment policies and programmes. Education must be an integral part of ending child labour. Measures aimed at getting and keeping children in school require policy attention, such as ensuring universal and free basic education of good quality, aligning the minimum working age and the end of compulsory schooling, and establishing early childhood development, childcare and pre-primary education.

### **Objectives**

In alignment with the theme of the President of the General Assembly, “Unity in diversity, for the advancement of peace, sustainable development, and human dignity for everyone everywhere”, the informal interactive dialogue aims to raise awareness and accelerate efforts towards the elimination of child labour in all its forms, including the forced recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. It would also be an opportunity to share best practices and to identify challenges and gaps in the achievement of SDGs, including SDG 8 (Target 8.7) ahead of its review at the High-level Political Forum in July 2025 and the Second World Summit on Social Development in November 2025.

### **Guiding questions**

- What good practices have Member States put in place to promote fundamental principles and rights at work with a focus on the effective abolition of child labour?
- What can be done to eliminate child labour in the rural and informal economies?
- What can be done to eliminate child labour in enterprises and in supply chains?
- What can be done to get and keep children in school?
- How can efforts to prevent and address the forced recruitment of children in armed conflict and other worst forms of child labour be strengthened?
- What can be done to accelerate progress in the implementation of SDG Target 8.7 and the Pact for the Future?
- How can the elimination of child labour support the achievement of the SDGs more broadly?

### **Format and outcome**

The informal interactive dialogue will take place on Tuesday, 13 May 2025, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Trusteeship Council Chamber at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. It will consist of an opening segment and an interactive panel discussion. A detailed programme will be circulated in due course.

The President of the General Assembly will prepare an informal summary of the discussion, which will be circulated to all Member States.

The United Nations Webcast services will provide live streaming coverage of the meeting as well as on-demand coverage (recorded video) in all 6 UN official languages plus floor language, through the UN Web TV website at: <http://webtv.un.org>.

### **Participation**

Participation in the informal interactive dialogue will be open to Member States and observers of the General Assembly, the United Nations system, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations with consultative status in ECOSOC.

### **Accessibility arrangements**

Delegations are requested to inform the Secretariat of the accessibility requirements of their delegates to facilitate participation in meetings. Upon request, adjustments can be made to seating arrangements with a view to enabling the participation of persons with disabilities. For individual requests, please contact the Meetings Support Section of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (email: [accessibilitycentre@un.org](mailto:accessibilitycentre@un.org); phone: 212 963 7348/9) no later than three working days prior to the meeting.