Convention on the Rights of the Child,
New York, 20 November 1989

Objectives

The Convention is the principal children's treaty encompassing a full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The Convention aims at protecting children from discrimination, neglect and abuse. It grants and provides for the implementation of rights for children both in times of peace and during armed conflict. The Convention constitutes a rallying point and a useful tool for civil society and individuals, working for the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. In many respects, it is an innovative instrument.

Key Provisions

It is the first legally binding international instrument, which provides in a single text universally recognized norms and standards concerning the protection and promotion of the rights of the child.

It is the most rapidly and widely ratified international human rights instrument in the world. Such unprecedented wide participation clearly demonstrates a common political will to improve the situation of children.

The Convention emphasizes the spirit of complementarity and interdependence of human rights by combining civil and political rights with economic, social and cultural rights. It calls for a holistic approach in analysis and recognizes that the enjoyment of one right cannot be separated from the enjoyment of others.

It establishes a new vision of the child, combining provisions aimed at protecting the child through positive action by the State, the parents and relevant institutions, with the recognition of the child as a holder of participatory rights and freedoms.

In so doing, it establishes rights in new areas which were not covered by previous international instruments, such as the right of the child to freely express views and have them given due weight, and the right of the child to a name and nationality from birth. In addition the Convention established standards in new areas including the issue of alternative care, the rights of disabled and refugee children; and the administration of juvenile justice. The need for recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of neglect, exploitation or abuse is also set forth.

The Convention acknowledges the primary role of the family and parents in the care and protection of the child, while stressing the obligation of the State to help families in carrying this task. It calls for positive action by institutions and the State or parents.

It constitutes a useful tool for advocacy and greater awareness of the new perspective of children's rights, and attaches special importance to international cooperation and assistance as ways of achieving the effective protection of children's rights.
Four general principles are enshrined in the Convention. They express the philosophy it conveys and provide guidance for national programmes of implementation.

Key provisions focus on:

Non-discrimination;

Best interests of the child;

Right to life, survival and development;

Views of the child.

Article 43 of the Convention establishes the Committee on the Rights of the Child, a monitoring body of ten experts, for the purpose of examining the progress made by States parties in implementing the Convention.

Entry into force: 2 September 1990  Status as at 15 June 2000: Signatories: 140 Contracting Parties: 191