

Description of the committee



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BUSTER**

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was established under the General Assembly. With its strong presence in 155 countries, UNICEF is the world's leading advocate for children. It has the global authority to influence decision-makers, and the variety of partners at the grassroots level to turn the most innovative ideas into reality. It believes that nurturing and caring for children are the cornerstones of human progress. UNICEF was created with this purpose in mind, to work with others to overcome the obstacles that poverty, violence, disease and discrimination place in a child's path, and therefore, advocates for measures to give children the best start in life.

UNICEF is a part of the Global Movement for Children. Through this movement, it encourages young people to speak out and participate in the decisions that affect their lives. UNICEF upholds the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It works to assure equality for those who are discriminated against, girls and women in particular, and works for the Millennium Development Goals and for the progress promised in the United Nations Charter. It strives for peace and security, and work to hold everyone accountable to the promises made for children. TOPIC: Child Labour in the Arab World

INTRODUCTION Children are God's gift that is to be nurtured, well raised and taken care of; this is true when it comes to one's children but what about the 250 million working children around the world, the ten million street children in the Arab World? Who is taking care of them? In fact, Child labour is a complex social and political issue with a long and evolving history: child labour first became an international issue in the 1860s, but it was not until the 1980s, more than a century later, that a global movement began to take shape. Then, in the second half of the 1990s, the international profile of child labour attained unprecedented levels. And, nowadays, the

phenomenon of " child labour" has moved to new dimensions. The work of children has become a global issue and a topic of crucial concern. Children carry out a very wide range of tasks and activities when they work, and considerable differences exist between the many kinds of work children do. Some are difficult and demanding, others are more hazardous and morally reprehensible. However, not all work done by children should be classified as child labour that is targeted for elimination. Children's or adolescents' participation in light work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling may be regarded as acceptable. The ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138 and the worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182 provide essential guidance on these matters. Therefore, the term " child labour" is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and is harmful to their physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children. Furthermore, it involves the kind of work that 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. In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 45.3 percent of children ages 6 to 14 years were working in Lebanon. Children are employed in metal works, handicraft and artisan establishments, as well as sales, construction work and the operation of machinery. Moreover, in Egypt in 2007 an estimated 20.5% of children between 6 and 14 years are working, 73% of them are boys and the rest 27% are girls, both working mainly in agriculture doing seasonal work for 11 hours per day, seven days a week, far above the number of hours permitted

under Egypt's Child Law. Whether or not particular forms of "work" can be called "child labour" depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed and the objectives pursued by individual countries. The answer varies from country to country as well as among sectors within countries.

BackgroundThe ILO's Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) states that the minimum age for entry into employment should not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling, and not less than 15 years, or 14 in the case of countries "whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed" (Article 2, paragraph 3 and 4). The situation is not clear-cut for children aged 12-14, because Convention No. 138, Article 7, paragraph 1, permits light work for 13 to 14 year-olds (or 12 to 13 year-olds in developing countries). Consequently the country-specific number of children in light work had to be subtracted from the national total of economically active 12 to 14 year-olds, and then added to the remaining number of 5 to 11 year-olds. Despite all this, the ultimate aspiration being 16 years offers maximum flexibility for developing nations that are unable to meet this target by allowing them to set a minimum age of 14 until they are able to comply fully with the convention 138.

TypologyThe member countries of the International Labour Organization ILO unanimously adopted the convention 182 that calls for the elimination of the Worst Forms of Child labor as a matter of urgency.

C. 182 in the article 4 unambiguously identified four worst forms to be targeted, namely: 1- All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; 2- The use, procuring or offering of a child for

prostitution of pornography or for pornographic performances; 3- The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities; especially working children in the Arab states are vulnerable to participation in illicit activities such as drug trafficking, recruitment by religious extremists, poor health, exposure to unsafe working environment; The above three, while ambiguous, are difficult to measure using national survey data and difficult to quantify at the national level because of their hidden illegal nature. 4- A fourth and less-defined category was also included, called "hazardous work" which is likely to form the largest category of the worst forms. Hazardous work, as defined by the ILO, is the work which, by its nature or circumstance in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health (physical or mental), safety or morals of children. Hazards could also derive from excessive workload, physical conditions of work, and/or work intensity in terms of the duration or hours of work even where the activity or occupation is known to be non-hazardous or safe. And, according to the ILO, in most Arab countries, the minimum age for employment in hazardous work has been raised from 16 to 18 years. On the other hand, light work may be allowed for children 12 and older. The ILO defines light work as work that is not likely to be harmful to a child's health and development and not likely to prejudice a child's attendance at school and his or her participation in vocational training, nor "the capacity to benefit from the instruction received". In determining whether work is likely to be harmful, the ILO takes into consideration the duration of work, the conditions under which the work is done, and the effects on school attendance, among other factors. Child Traffickingthe recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purposes of sexual or labor exploitation, forced labor, or slavery or what is commonly

known as child trafficking is becoming a wide-spread phenomenon in that Arab world. Indeed, Yemen is a country of origin for internationally trafficked children. Yemeni children, mainly boys, are trafficked to Saudi Arabia for exploitation as beggars, street vendors, and unskilled laborers. Furthermore, Yemeni women and underage girls are reportedly trafficked internally from rural areas to cities for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Press reports in 2004, claimed that children were trafficked out of the country to work as street beggars, domestic help, or as camel jockeys in oil rich Gulf States at a rate of approximately 200 children per week. Child prostitution and pornography Commercial sexual exploitation of children is an increasing problem in most Arab countries. Children are involved in prostitution, and sometimes find themselves in situations that amount to forced labor. In fact, commercial sexual exploitation of children is reported to occur in Lebanon and the authorities managed to discover and break up three child prostitution rings. In 2003, among 428 testimonies collected by a local NGO, Dar Al Amal, about children who have been sexually exploited, 130 of them were domestic workers. Moreover, it is reported that more than 80% of the estimated 93, 000 street children in Egypt are exploited sexually, mainly through prostitution and pornography. To add, it is thought that Morocco is probably the most affected country in the region, and the factors behind this phenomenon are poverty, the low status of women, early and forced marriage and tourism. Child domestic labour Child labour in domestic fields is also a matter of high importance. This phenomenon is really problematic especially in Morocco. Actually, in a 60-page report titled " Inside the Home, Outside the Law: Domestic workers in Morocco," Human Rights Watch revealed that tens of thousands of Moroccan girls, trapped by family poverty

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and lack of schooling, endure widespread abuse as maids toiling out of sight in the privacy of their employers' homes. The girls, many as young as five making them some of the youngest child domestics in the world, work as long as 100 hours a week with no rest or days off, for as little as 70 cents a day. Current and former child domestics have described to the New York-based organization's field researchers how they have had to face frequent physical and verbal abuse, denial of adequate food and medical care, as well as sexual harassment by employers and their families. Child labour in Agriculture Children are also involved in agricultural activities especially in Lebanon where approximately 11 percent of working children are employed in agriculture. It can be estimated that South Lebanon alone encompasses around 22, 400 working youth and children in tobacco cultivation, of which 7400 are 5-9 years old, 7400 are 10-14 years old and 7600 are 15-19 years old. The majority of children working in tobacco cultivation are unpaid, with some entering the labor force as early as 3 years old. In Egypt it is also common to see young boys and girls engaged in the cotton industry. The number of the young workers is estimated to exceed one million according to the human Right Watch. Children engaged in this type of labour frequently work for long hours in scorching heat, haul heavy loads of produce, are exposed to toxic pesticides, and suffer high rates of injury from sharp knives and other dangerous tools. Their work is grueling and harsh, violating their rights to health, education, and protection from work that is hazardous or exploitative. Street children Usually, street children are found to be engaged in diverse forms of work including selling cigarettes, begging, shining shoes, and other miscellaneous occupations. Additionally, these children might work as laborers in small family-run workshops that produce ceramics, jewelry,

woodwork, and leather goods. Many children work as apprentices before they reach 12 years of age, particularly in the informal handicraft industry. There are today some 5, 000 street children in Khartoum alone. Child soldiersThe Arab world is an area where child soldiers have become an integral part of the fighting. Children today are engaged in fighting in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, and Yemen. These include children younger than 15 serving in a number of radical groups. Young teens are also at the center of fighting in Palestine, making up as much as 70 percent of the participants in the intifada. Causes of child labourOne of the most important factors aggravating the child labour problem is poverty and the need for all family members to contribute economically to their survival. Furthermore, child labour can stem from one or more causes in any country, including:* limited access to education institutions or programmes, direct or indirect costs of education preventing children accessing school;* poor quality education leading to households placing more value on work than schooling;* cultural and/or traditional practices in certain geographical locations or among certain people, for example not considering child labor as an unaccepted phenomenon as some people think in regions in Egypt;* employment practices where small business may prefer to employ children because they can pay them less than adults;* The death of parents or guardians, creating a new generation of child-headed households. Many children are being withdrawn from school to help in the home or to begin to work;* Armed conflict and children being forced to take up arms or give support in other labour forms;* Lack of acknowledgment of the problem of child labour by some governments, other socio-economic and political actors and even the public at largeConsequence of child labourAs a result of all the

dramatic causes of child labour and the harsh conditions that these working children are exposed to, the Arab world will continue to suffer and the consequences will be the following: stunted growth of future generation, inability to harness human resources, to contribute to development and to benefit from development, citizens with accumulated frustration, adult unemployment, depreciation in wages, perpetuation of poverty, persistence of child labour, perpetuation of economic inequality, increased abuse of children, increased illiteracy, ignorant populace, citizens with inferiority complex, malnourished citizens, sick citizens, political instability, early morbidity of citizens, mental deformity of citizens, perpetuation of ill treatment, inter generational phenomenon of child labour, increased bottlenecks in the development process, wasted human resources, wasted human talents and skills, scientists, artists and persons of eminence lost to child labour.

Past Action to Eliminate Child Labour

As it is previously mentioned, the worldwide efforts to eliminate child labour began with the approval on the conventions 138 and 182. And later on, all the organizations that are concerned of children (UNICEF, ILO, SIMPOC, IPEC, UNDP, HRW...) began to put plans, to mobilize in small conferences, donations, and activities and to publish yearly reports in order to alleviate the tense of the problem. The Arab World also, suffering from this phenomenon, launched several campaigns, held many conferences and enforced some rules to follow:

- * In Lebanon, the law sets the minimum age for employment is 14 years. Youth may not work more than 6 hours per day, must have a 13-hour period of rest between workdays, and may not work overtime or at night (between 7: 00 p. m. and 7: 00 a. m). In addition, youth 14 to 18 must pass a medical examination to ensure that they can undertake the work in which

they are to be engaged, and the prospective employer must request the child's identity card to verify his or her age.* In January 2006, the "Red Card Campaign to Child Labor" was launched by ILO-IPEC in close partnership with Egypt's National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the African Football Confederation at the African Cup of Nations hosted by Egypt. This campaign, which was sponsored by the First Lady, calls for the progressive elimination of child labor and its worst and most hazardous forms as an urgent priority. Although on the international scale the efforts to eliminate child labour are growing and some are very fruitful, on the regional scale of the Arab World the efforts are still shy and limited. Recommendations for Creating a Resolution Child labour is a serious problem, hindering the development and the promotion of the will of the Arab League. This issue must be considered from many different angles. Delegates must:

- * Try to encourage governments to punish offenders who exploit children in different domains and most importantly rescue all child labourers from any hazardous work;
- * Consider the importance of education as an alternative to child labour;
- * Redefine and apply a strict universal definition to the terms child labour, unconditional children labour, hazardous labour;
- * Enhance campaigns against child labour and increase the mass media coverage of child labour;
- * Request more statistics on child labour and try to control illegal and undeclared forms of child labour;