

*Economic and Social Council
(ECOSOC)*

*Enforcing Penalties,
Imposing Fees, and
Prosecuting
Companies Involved in
Child Labor Across
Southeast Asia*

Moderator: Diego Morgan Vázquez

Director: Paolo Balcázar Regordosa

I. INTRODUCTION

The Economic and Social Council, commonly known as ECOSOC, is one of the 6 original organs established by the United Nations Charter written in 1945. According to the UN charter, the purpose of this committee is to “promote collective action for a sustainable world” (ECOSOC, 2024) , and to do so through the development of resolutions focused on the economic and social well-being of all members of this council. ECOSOC is composed of 54 member states, which are rotated for a period of 3 years, and unlike the Security Council, there are no permanent members. ECOSOC works in collaboration with other main organs of the United Nations, such as the United Nations General Assembly or the Security Council. ECOSOC members meet once a month, with sessions alternating between the UN’s headquarters in New York City (The United States of America) and Geneva (Swiss Confederation).

ECOSOC coordinates the work of a total of 14 UN Specialized agencies, 10 functional commissions, 5 regional commissions, as well as 9 UN funds (ECOSOC, 2024). Once ECOSOC members assemble and analyse the data from these different bodies of the United Nations system, it then does policy recommendation and analysis which are distributed to members of the United Nations. Among some of the topics which are generally debated within ECOSOC meetings are: standards and quality of living, economic development and policies, social and humanitarian endeavours. Across its history, ECOSOC has been at the forefront of battles against diseases that could tamper human development, and in 1994 it created the special UN entity UNAIDS, in helping combat against the ever growing HIV/AIDS pandemic. Through the High Level Political Forum of ECOSOC, it oversees the implementation of actions related to achieving the 2030 agenda set by the UN in 2015. ECOSOC also had a vital role in the aftermath of several economic crises across history, since it serves as a bridge through which banking and financial institutions such as the World Bank, WTO (World Trade Organisation), or the UNCTAD are able to expose ideas and come up with solutions for all of its members. In line with the topic of this committee, one of ECOSOC’s oldest functional commissions is the Human Rights Council, aiming at promoting the access to Universal Human Rights across all nations. (ECOSOC, 2015).

Child Labour Exploitation is one of the most horrific and anti-human actions that any person can perpetuate. The International Labour Organisation establishes Child labour as “any work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and dignity, and that is

harmful to their physical and mental development” (ILO, 2024). Examples of child labour include: slavery or similar practices, child traffickin or forced recruitment to armed conflicts. For this particular committee, the focus of child labour will be put in South East Asia. From the 1990s to today, South East Asia has been characterised by a period of significant economic growth (Seong, 2023), with nations such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, Bangladesh or Indonesia now big players on the global stage. Part of this economic boom is due to the relocalisation of manufacturing processes from developed economies, to these nations with particularly low production costs. And yet, even as the macroeconomic indexes of these nations have vastly improved, the quality of life for the most underprivileged has barely seen an increase. The overall lack of opportunities has put families at severe constraints and has created an environment in which issues such as child labour have risen ever since.

The main factor which has helped in the proliferation of child labour across South East Asia is a social factor, which is the relative indifference there is towards the unsafe development of children in these areas. A very common examples of this is parents voluntarily sending their children into child labour rings, with the purpose of gaining an economic incentive. This is particularly common in underdeveloped villages across Vietnam, Malaysia or Indonesia, where the only opportunity to gain “decent” employment is through “recruiters”, who are the bridge between potential employers and children who are taken advantage of. These recruiters then send children (in what is considered to be a form of modern slavery) to large manufacturing factories and providers distributed across Asia, where the situation for them is dire to say the least. These providers are the basis for the global consumerist culture, and more often than not give their services to some of the most important names in the fashion, technology and tobacco industries (Philpott, 2024). And all of these transnational companies' supposed goals for “sustainable development”, are torn down at the sight of even cheaper production costs.

All of these factors have resulted in a situation where children are one of the main providers for a family, which makes this issue even harder to eradicate, since the expenses of millions of families across Asia would suddenly be vulnerable if the problem disappeared immediately. And what is more surprising is the government’s intervention, or lack thereof, in this issue. Even as international pressure is focused on these nations, there is an evident condoning both by the government and the civil society with this topic. Children are becoming a foundation for a lot of these nation’s economies, and will continue to do so unless drastic measures are taken (Action Education, 2020).

I. HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The history of child labor is one that is difficult to trace to a specific moment. What is clear, however, is that children have always been involved in some sort of activities related to the improvement of the family economy, no matter what culture. Lower life expectancy in ancient cultures also meant that what is now defined as a “children”, was already a productive adult in say Ancient Greece.

Modern Child Labor, however, can be traced back to the advent of industrialization and modernization, and the rise of the modern factory. Therefore, the first nations that started experimenting with the rise of child labor and exploitation were the ones who industrialized the earliest. In Great Britain during the Victorian Era for instance, children as young as four years old, expected to contribute to the expenses of the new urban life, would be crawling down industrial mines, or working with heavy machinery without any safety equipment whatsoever. Industrialization then started sprawling across the globe, and with it, child labor was reaching new corners of the world. The United States, whose rapid industrialization rate helped it become one of the world’s military and economic powers, was at the beginning of its history one of the nations with the highest child labor rates in the world. However, the head start that Western nations had in industrialization also meant that it was one of the first to implement laws and acts aiming at regulating the minimum employment age.

In 1938, in the context of the Great Depression and strong economic hardships, the *Fair Labor Standards Act* signed into law by President Franklin Roosevelt was the first to place restrictions on hours and job types for teenagers under the age of 16. Countries such as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the French Republic, and Dominion of Canada would soon follow. 35 years later, in 1973, the International Labor Organization signed the *Minimum Age Convention*, aiming at regulating the employment of children and teenagers all across the world. The resolution was ratified by 172 countries, and it seemed as though child labour was on a path to be eradicated from the world. Yet, as the Western Hemisphere was on track to eliminate child labor after a centuries-long effort, the panorama for the Eastern Hemisphere looked starkly different. Even as most Asian nations ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention, the truth is that these nations were barely beginning to see the results of industrialization in their respective homelands. It wouldn’t be until the mid-20th century in a post-WWII world, almost 200 years after the first modern

factories started operating in Great Britain thus giving birth to the Industrial Revolution, that rapid industrialization would finally arrive in Asia, particularly South Eastern Asia.

Ever since antiquity, Asia has been an economic, military, and cultural powerhouse, and is often credited with the invention of some of humanity's greatest inventions. However, experts have noted that the rise of colonialism in Asia also led to the economic downfall and turmoil that Asia experienced between the 1800s and 1940 (Nayyar, 2019). The policies exerted by empires over their colonies were quite straightforward: the homeland was the place where industrialization would take place, and would function with the resources from their far larger and richer resource-wise colonies. This meant that over this 150-200 year period, most of Asia was left behind in terms of modernization and industrialization compared to their European and American counterparts. After World War II, nationalism spread across colonies all around the world, with people from these colonies wanting to bring down their old colonial rulers. This would be the time in which the nations concerning the topic of this committee would gain independence and achieve individual sovereignty.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, The Federation of Malaysia, Republic of Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Kingdom of Cambodia are some of the nations that achieved independence during this period. Now fully independent countries, and free to take decisions regarding their economic growth and foundations, most if not all of them started to rapidly industrialize. This period of intense industrialization and modernization of Asia led to some of history's largest economic growths, with some of the aforementioned nations increasing their nominal GDPs by over 10% during a steady period of time. This time in Asian history has come to be known as the "Asian Economic Miracle". One of the most important factors in helping this economic miracle was the amazingly low manufacturing costs, in part thanks to below-average minimum wages across Asia. All of these factors contributed to the mass relocalization of multinational companies' manufacturing processes, shifting the tide from national production to a globalized system of production, and helping Asia become a manufacturing powerhouse. The first countries to exploit these opportunities were Republic of Korea, People's Republic of China, and Japan in the 1960s, and by the 1980s their Southeast Asian counterparts would follow, with each of them specializing in a particular form of manufacturing. Vietnam for example would focus on electronics, with over 21% of their exports coming from the technology industry. The Kingdom of Cambodia would focus on the textile industry, making up 70% of its total exports. Malaysia would also focus on electronics, whereas the Republic of Indonesia would focus on exploiting its natural resources, with natural exports now being the main export in

Indonesia. And the results came immediately. Between 1990 and 2017, extreme lack of funds rates were reduced by two-thirds, with general poverty being halved in this same time period. However, there is a dark side to this topic of economic growth. The truth is that this phenomenon in Southeast Asia wouldn't have been possible without the hard work of millions of children contributing to the economy (World Bank, 2022).

While macroeconomic factors saw a huge increase during this time period, purchasing power and poverty rates did not diminish at the same gigantic rate. Let's take The Socialist Republic of Vietnam for example. In the span of 1993-1998, there was an astonishing 20% decrease in poverty rates all around the country, but the number of people living below the poverty line was still situated at more than 22 million people (World Bank, 2012). Feeding an average family was, and still is a difficult challenge for millions of families across Southeast Asia. Furthermore, being relatively new nations, the lack of a solidified state apparatus meant that businesses and factories would operate virtually unregulated. Therefore, it is no surprise that child labor rates dramatically increased from the 1980s to today. Concerns for an increase in child labor rates across Asia started almost immediately after the industrialization period started in the region. In 1985, just 5 years into the South Asian Economic Boom, the Child Workers in Asia Association was founded, with the purpose of uniting the main NGOs against Child Labor at the time, and spread information on the topic (Asia Society, 2024). It is important to note that the system through which child workers are trafficked in today's world was engineered and perfected during the 1990s decade.

Child traffickers would spot economically needy families in generally impoverished and rural communities and offer the children the opportunity to go abroad, work and generate income for their families. Most of these families agree to it, as their children would now provide for their families and help with family income, however this is the moment in which their children are now officially in the circle of trafficking. The traffickers then act as an intermediary between these villages full of desperate people, and large manufacturing companies, which then supply cheap labor to some of the largest multinational corporations in the world. There is little to no historic data or records on the rates of child labor in South East Asia, however experts unanimously agree that it has been on the rise since the 1990s, and is expected to continue to grow.

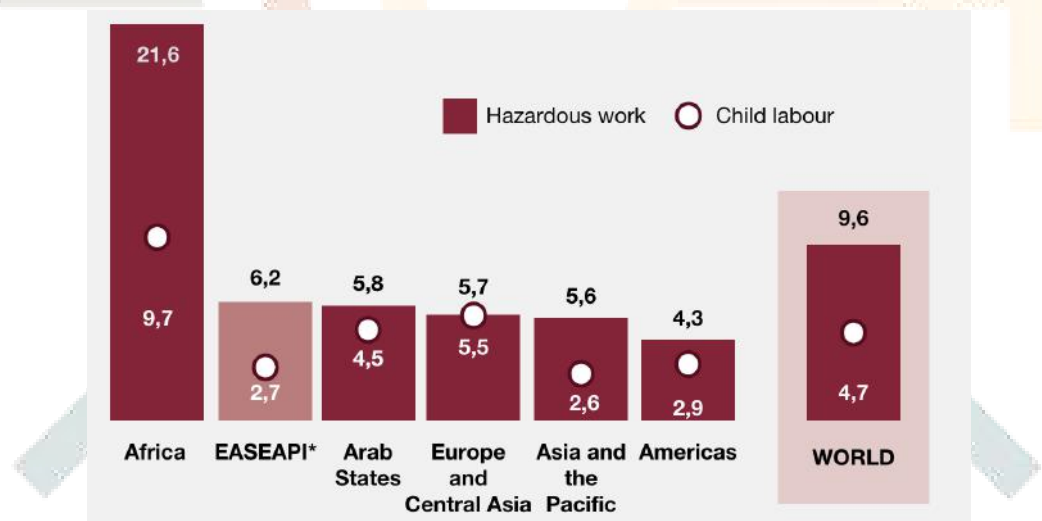
It is important to note that when a news outlet reports that a specific company has been caught engaging in child labor, they generally refer to their contractors (separate 3rd parties) using child labor for the work they have been contracted. A common practice for these contractors has been the establishment of "sweatshops", which in its textbook definition

refers to a factory in the clothing industry where manual labor is rewarded with low salaries and long working hours. These sweatshops are a golden mine for traffickers who wish to introduce their children into the manufacturing industry. A company which has been involved in a child labor scandal is world renowned sports retailer Nike. In the year 2001, it was reported that the average Nike contractor worker in Indonesia was earning less than 14 cents per hour. Nike, however, took action, after a world outcry and near boycott of their products. It established an audit department within the same company, which would regularly visit the factories of their contractors. It also opened the gates to their factories for external audits and human rights groups to inspect and denounce any abuse to human rights, and the presence of child labor. In the year 2012, it was discovered that eleven factories in China and Taiwan, associated with the Apple supply chain, were implicated in the use of child labor and exploitation.

Among these factories, a Chinese company by the name of Foxconn, was identified to have employed 74 children under the age of sixteen, who were subjected to harsh treatment. Some of the treatment that these children received was the reduction of their monthly salaries. Furthermore, due to cost-cutting measures, used oil was utilized in the bathrooms. They were also forced into lifting heavy goods and obligatory medical tests such as hepatitis B and pregnancy. A number of the 11 factories involved in child labor had been recruited using falsified identity documents, further solidifying the case for child labor in Asia being a much larger trafficking issue. Some of these children even went as far as committing suicide. Apple's CEO Tim Cook, after immense media tic pressure, immediately took action. Apple committed itself to provide for the families of the children which had been subject to this harsh treatment. Apple also underwent massive investigations into their factories in South East Asia, which ultimately resulted in the termination of a contract with one specific contractor in China. Moreover, Apple implemented a new company policy in which the labor of people below the age of 16 is not permitted, according to the legal age from this country. The company was mandated to reimburse the reduced salaries to their workers upon returning them to their homes. Simultaneously, the company made 8,000 calls to provide protection to workers who had been whistleblowers in denouncing these conditions, many of whom reported experiencing intimidation from various factories.

I. CURRENT SITUATION

The panorama for Child Labour in Southeast Asia as of 2024 is dire, to say the least. As explained in the previous section, the combination of social and cultural factors condo in these laboural practices, precarious economic conditions and circumstances which drive low-income families into the circle of child labour, and a lack of strong government plans to both prevent and attack infant labour has made of Child Labour one of the pressing issues in the modern era for Southeast Asia. The last major study on child labour was carried out by a joint ILO-UNICEF committee in 2020. In it, it was estimated that about 12% of the infant population in Southeastern Asia were subjected to such practices. This translates to roughly 41 million children, of which 14.4 million are girls and 26 million boys. 25 million Out of these 41 million children, 40% of them worked in hazardous conditions which endangered their physical and mental well-being. (ILO, 2020). Although the percentage of child labour in these nations is lower than the global average, it is worth noting that excluding Africa (with its 22% rate driving up global averages), it is the region with the highest child labour rate in the world.



*EASEAPI: Eastern Asia, Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent global economic downturn that the global economy experienced, Southeast Asia was struck the hardest. After decades of miraculous growth, it all came to an abrupt end by the beginning of the new decade. Poverty rates in The Socialist Republic of Vietnam were estimated to increase from 18% to 30%, and Cambodia was reporting losses of more than 3 billion dollars for its

essential tourism sector (Action Education, 2020). This in turn led to higher poverty rates, and drove more children into the child labour cycle. These statistics accurately display the fact that poverty and the hope for better economic opportunities is the main factor behind a lot of families and children getting into these practices. When discussing child labour, it is impossible to ignore the vast inequalities that this children are presented with when it comes to schooling and academic opportunities.

The International Labour Organisation points out that of the children that work in hazardous conditions, just a little over a half of them (52%) attend school at the same rate as other children in the area. In a region as academically behind as Southeast Asia is, where formal education is a lot of the time the only way to secure stable job opportunities, this is only encouraging low-income families to stay in this vicious cycle. Another important statistic to mention is that in The socialist Republic of Vietnam, over 86% of the children who engage in underage labour are originally from rural areas, which in Vietnam have some of the lowest rates of economic development. Nowadays, children are actively participating in the creation of over 50 different types of goods across Southeast Asia, most notable in the agricultural, mining and manufacturing sector. In 2022, the US department of Labour released a report detailing the products and goods produced with child labour according their region of provenance. Cambodia for instance, has some of the highest rates of children in the agricultural sector. Indonesia has a strong electronic manufacturing and mining prevalence of child labour, where as Vietnam's textile industry is plagued from products in which children took part of. (US Department of Labour, 2022).

The way in which children get into the world of child labour is very diverse, which adds another layer of difficulty to solving this issue. For a vast majority of children, they are forced into child labour due to economic difficulties, and start helping their parents in their jobs. Whether it is on the field, or even household chores, children help their families by providing assistance on their caretaker's jobs. However, there are far more dramatic circumstances through which children enter child labour, for example child trafficking. Across several underprivileged towns in Southeast Asia, there are people known as "recruiters". These people lure families and children under the promise of education and paid employment. Then they are transported within national and even international borders (which constitutes a violation to international and local laws) and are then forced into hazardous exploitative labour. (HRW, n.d). This in turn is prejudicial to their mental, psychological and physical well-being. (European Commission, n.d).

The government efforts from nations in the Southeast Asia region are minimal, to say the least. Although some of the nations with the largest rates of child labour such as The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Kingdom of Cambodia or Republic of Indonesia have signed and ratified several conventions on child labour (most notably ILO no.138 and 182 on Minimum Age Employment and Worst forms of Child Labour), there is little to no government follow-up on the implementation of these policies. And if you think about it, it makes total sense (ILO, 2021). Some of the region's highest employers in all sorts of sectors, from mining to manufacturing, or from textile to electronics, are more likely than not to have at least one case of child labour, whether it is willingful or part of a system of child trafficking.

For nations such as Laos, which has some of the lowest nominal gross domestic products in the region (a little over 15 billion dollars), shutting down some of these industries because of child labour cases is simply not an option. Furthermore the lack of a legal framework to properly prosecute such companies or entities promoting child labour is inexistent, with no legal sanctions ever been administered to any company under child labour claims (Vietnam News, 2019). As of 2024, the only way through which child labour can be fought is through economic sanctions imposed on exports from companies known for child labour. The United States banned 7 companies' imports in 2023 under presumptions of forced labour, and the European Union keeps a close monitoring of the products coming into the Union. (Cushing, 2023).

I. UN ACTIONS

The standardisation of work practices and ethics has been a primordial issue for the UN and its specialised agencies since its creation in 1945. In 1946, just a year after the founding of the UN, the International Labour Organization was established as one of the first specialised agencies of this new intergovernmental body. The purpose of the ILO was to give a voice to workers, as well as to serve as a platform for recommendations for governments worldwide. ILO has proved instrumental in promoting worker's rights through their conventions, through which they encourage nations to advocate for a fair and free workplace.

Regarding child labour, the ILO approved its Resolution No.138, on "Minimum Age Employment". Convention No. 138 of the International Labour Organization addresses the critical issue of child labour. This convention, signed in 1973, aims to protect children from entering the workforce at a young age by implementing one of the most effective strategies. Specifically, the goal of LO Convention No. 138 is the successful abolition of child labour to achieve this, it mandates that countries establish a minimum age for employment and develop national policies aimed at eradicate this problematic. (ILO, 2024).

The convention has been ratified by 176 countries, including China, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Cambodia. Another such resolution from the ILO was Resolution No.182, on "Worst forms of child labour". Child Labour, as the statistics demonstrate, is an issue of significant magnitude. In response, the International Labour Organization has emphasised the need to reinforce existing conventions addressing this issue. Consequently, Convention No. 182 was ratified, outlining international concerns and the urgent need for action. This convention focuses primarily on the elimination of the worst forms of this ongoing issue while maintaining the long-term objective of eradicating all of its forms. This convention requires all member states to take immediate and effective measures subject to a time limit to eliminate the worst forms of child labour as an urgent priority (ILO, 2024).

The International Labour Organization is also host to some of the largest funds dedicated to contributing resources to the fight against child labour. As part of the Sustainable Development Goals established by the General Assembly, and ratified in 2015, SDG 8 is the one concerning this committee. Under the title "Decent Work and Economic Growth", this

agenda's purpose is to promote well-being in the workplace, as well as equal and positive opportunities for everyone. A step towards achieving this goal is by eradicating forced labour and exploitation, including infant labour, as stipulated by Article 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals resolution of the United Nations. *“Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour; end modern slavery and human trafficking, and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms”* (A/RES/70/1, 2015). The ILO is host to the fund Alliance 8.7, which is an intervention panel and fund through which the most affected nations worldwide in terms of child labour are able to receive and donate help. Any member nation of ILO is free to join, as well as NGOs and private foundations (Alliance 8.7, 2024).

In regards to the trafficking of minors with the purpose of forced labour, the United Nations (through a joint ILO/UNICEF initiative) passed in 2000 the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons”, the first one of its kind. In it, basic guidelines for the prevention and ultimate prosecution of people involved in human trafficking, particularly infant trafficking, are outlined. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is another such agency that has taken action to tackle child labour and develop initiatives towards solving it, with its focus being more on the trafficking aspect of infant exploitation. Whereas the ILO seeks to standardise and come up with guidelines for the improvement of conditions for workers, UNICEF seeks to tackle one of its many roots, such as trafficking. For instance, between 2015 and 2019, UNICEF funded a joint European Union/UNODC (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime) called “The Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants”. It is to this date, one of the largest studies on international trafficking routes (UN, n.d). A lot of children who are being trafficked to work in other nations under illegal immigration go through these routes, and further suppressing actions against these routes are yet to be made by the corresponding national authorities, such as Laos for instance.

If the work of the UN can be summarised in one word, it would be **theoretical**. The outlines, guidelines, and protocols that the United Nations has passed in the past 50 years are some of the best action plans that we have against child labour and trafficking. Yet, the UN has failed to exert enough pressure for nations to actually take this action into their local legal framework, and until such pressure is applied, all of the solutions that have been proposed in UN committees will still remain in vain.

I. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

As it has been stated throughout the whole background paper, the issue of child labour is a multilayered and complex topic, that requires of strategic and concise actions to take it to an end. A lack of government intervention throughout the whole Southeast Asia region, has led to the skyrocketing of child labour statistics, and therefore in the event a resolution paper was drafted, strong encouragement for a comprehensive government effort is essential. Another factor that contributed to the rise of child labour in this region are the minimal or null regulations preventing the illegal employment of children. In the event of a resolution, there needs to be an acknowledgement of the role of foreign enterprises in fostering an environment where child labour is not only prevalent but accepted. There is also the wider issue of trafficking that comes with child labour, and the illegal international immigration that a lot of these children are subject to is a point of attention. Finally, a shift in societal expectations on children and their role as providers for the family are vital to address this affair down to its deepest roots. With these points in mind, the following are some solutions which could be implemented:

1) Awareness and Education Campaigns

- a) Government and International efforts on educating the people of rural villages on the dangers of child labour, both for the mental and physical integrity of their children. Information on recruiting practices and other methods through which children are involved in exploitation is also necessary to prevent more cases.
- b) The lack of opportunities is one of the driving factors for children and families to get involved in infant labour. Looking at the long term, mass education campaigns and programs in rural villages should both prevent desertion and give children safe and stable job opportunities in a later adult life.
- c) Use of different platforms and media is relevant due to the variety of socioeconomic conditions in Southeast Asia. Digital media for urban areas for example could be key, whereas physical media for rural areas can be useful.

2) Increased penalties and limits for manufacturing enterprises

- a) Manufacturing companies should be forced to comply with external audits on their workforce and work environment. This will not only ensure a safe working place for all employees, but will also help in discovering cases of child labour.

- b) Creation of a legal framework through which the prosecution of parties (businesses, individuals, foreign enterprises) involved in child labour can be penalised according to each nation's penal code.
- c) Economic sanctions against foreign enterprises (particularly European and American) found to be manufacturing their products in Asia with manufacturers involved in child labour cases.

3) Specialized Task Forces and Funds

- a) Creation of Intergovernmental Child Labour specific Task Forces, where cooperation (economically, technologically, legally) can happen.
- b) Recollection of funds to implement actions of the committee through a variety of means, for example non-profits, existing NGOs, international cooperation, existing UN organs, etc.

4) Implementation of UN protocols on child trafficking

- a) UN protocols on Child labour, child trafficking, as well as other resolutions from ILO (no.138 and no.182 particularly) all have points which can serve to create a legal basis for the solutions that the committee implements.
- b) Similar to the child labour solution, creation of legal framework for charges specifically for child trafficking should be encouraged to be implemented, and similarly, businesses or entities found to be making business (voluntarily or not) with such guilty parties are expected to be punished accordingly to each nation's penal code.

COUNTRIES INVOLVED (CHOSEN FROM ECOSOC 54 MEMBER STATES; OBSERVERS CHOSEN DUE TO GEOPOLITICAL RELEVANCE)

1. Socialist Republic of Vietnam (OBSERVER)

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has ongoing efforts and its own shares of difficulties in addressing child labour. As a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Vietnam has committed to following international rules aimed at eliminating this problem. Vietnam developed its own National Program of Child Labor, which has taken an education and culture-based approach as the basis through which child labour rates can be lowered. Vietnam's relationship with ECOSOC and ILO has been important for Vietnam's in its efforts to combat child labor. Vietnam has also been actively involved in ECOSOC initiatives, being alongside Indonesia, one of the largest denouncers of child labour in Southeast Asia in dialogues and resolutions to improve social and economic conditions. (Vietnam plus, 2024). A total of 85% of children living in rural areas are part of child labour of some degree, and the rural and informal sectors of the country that experience a lack of education and economic opportunities have predominant child labour rates. It has one of the largest textile manufacturing industries across the world, and these factories (which supply to some of the largest apparel companies in the world) are some of the places with the highest concentration of child labour in the nation.

2. People's Republic of China

During the 1990s, China had some of the highest child labour rates in the world. Ever since then, China has made significant efforts in combating child labor through systematic and governmental approaches in line with International Labour Organization (ILO) guidelines. The country developed its own National Plan of Action on the Reduction of Child Labour, which has put an emphasis on education, law enforcement, and social welfare measures to combat this issue effectively. Data shows that approximately 8.3% of children aged 5-14 are now involved in child labor, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing, and services sectors. Collaboration with ECOSOC and ILO has helped China's efforts to improve enforcement capabilities, expand access to quality education, and enhance socio-economic conditions for vulnerable children, although most of it has come through its own government intervention. (DOL, n.d.). Now, the Republic of China is seen as an example across the whole of Asia on how to tackle significant child labor rates, even as rapid modernization takes over a nation.

3. Republic of Indonesia (OBSERVER)

Indonesia was the first nation in the whole of Asia to ratify the ILO protocols no.138 and

no.182, on Minimum Age Employment and Worst forms of child labor respectively.

Indonesia is an active member of ILO and UNICEF and is a strong advocate against child labor in the region. The country's National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and other legislative measures have aimed at reducing the high rates of child labor. Data shows that approximately 7.3% of children aged 7-14 are engaged in child labor, with sectors like agriculture, mining, and domestic work being significant contributors to the problem. (DOL, 2022). Its manufacturing tech industry is a major contributor to the economy and is also a focal point for unaccounted child labor. Some of the largest tech companies in the world get their microchips from nations like Indonesia, making Indonesian child labor relevant in the international scene.

4. Kingdom of Cambodia

Even after hard-fought efforts, Cambodia continues to present significant challenges related to child labor, exploitation, and trafficking, even after coordinated action with the International Labor Organization (ILO) and UNICEF. The country has implemented the Cambodia National Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and the Minimum Age for Employment Law. (DOL, 2022), all of which were based on previous ILO resolutions, particularly no.138 and no.182. Data shows that 10.9% of children aged 5-17 are engaged in child labor, primarily in agriculture, fishing, and domestic work, the latter of which is generally unaccounted for. Collaboration with ECOSOC and ILO is critical for Cambodia since these joint efforts have helped to enforce laws, provide social services, and improve educational opportunities for vulnerable children.

5. United States of America

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) standard, the United States of America has established helpful measures that will serve to combat child labor. Among these, the Fair Labor Standards Act works to provide and ensure a safe environment and conditions for minors, establishing minimum age requirements and a specific regulation, which finally will have the objective of maintaining human rights and access to education as a major concern. As of recent data, approximately 2.1% of children aged 5-14 are engaged in child labor, predominantly in agriculture and

informal sectors. (EPI, 2023) The U.S. collaborates closely with ECOSOC and ILO to enhance enforcement, strengthen social services, and promote educational opportunities to eradicate child labor. These efforts reflect a commitment to uphold international norms and protect vulnerable youth from exploitation, fostering a safer and more equitable environment for children across the country. The United States is also a major contractor of several manufacturing enterprises in Asia known for using child labor, and several major US companies like Adidas or Nike have been found guilty of employing this enterprise.

6. Argentine Republic
7. Commonwealth of Australia
8. Dominican Republic
9. Dominion of Canada
10. Federation of Malaysia (OBSERVER)
11. Federative Republic of Brazil
12. French Republic
13. Italian Republic
14. Kingdom of Spain
15. Kingdom of the Netherlands
16. Lao's People's Democratic Republic
17. Oriental Republic of Uruguay
18. People's Republic of Bangladesh
19. Republic of Colombia
20. Republic of Haiti
21. Republic of Ivory Coast
22. Republic of Korea
23. Republic of Paraguay
24. Republic of Poland
25. Republic of Senegal
26. Republic of South Africa
27. State of Japan
28. Swiss Confederation
29. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
30. United Mexican States

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