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Worst forms of child labour: assessing progress and persisting challenges

Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, Tomoya Obokata

Summary

In the present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 51/15, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, assesses the manifestations of the worst forms of child labour and discusses remaining challenges as well as promising initiatives regarding the elimination of these practices. He notes that despite a global commitment to end child labour by 2025 under target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, millions of children continue to be engaged in hazardous and exploitative work, particularly in digital and conflict settings. The Special Rapporteur finds that ending the worst forms of child labour effectively requires stronger legal enforcement, international cooperation, and inclusive, community-based strategies that involve children in shaping policies and solutions. A set of recommendations is offered to States and businesses.

I. Introduction

1. Child labour continues to affect nearly 138 million children worldwide and 54 million of them are engaged in hazardous work, which is considered child labour in its worst forms.[1] This is evidence of the fact that target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which promised to end all forms of child labour by 2025, remains unmet by far. The persistence of child labour also threatens progress on numerous other Sustainable Development Goals, such as those on the right to education (Goal 4), ending poverty (Goal 1) and inequality (Goal 10). It weakens economic growth (addressed in Goal 8), harms health and well-being (addressed in Goal 3) throughout the life cycle of the children affected, and taints supply chains and efforts towards sustainable production (addressed in Goal 12).

2. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur analyses the nature of the worst forms of child labour. He identifies persisting challenges in addressing these human rights violations and highlights promising practices. He concludes by issuing a set of recommendations addressed to States and businesses. In order to inform the research, a call for inputs was issued, and the Special Rapporteur thanks all entities that provided submissions.[2]

II. Activities of the Special Rapporteur

3. Since the presentation of his previous reports in September 2024, the Special Rapporteur continued to engage with a range of stakeholders and took part in multiple activities. As part of the annual United Nations Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum for the Asia-Pacific region, which was held in Bangkok, he attended, also in September 2024, a panel discussion on the rights of migrant workers, organized by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum. He also took part in a regional consultation on the draft joint general comment on xenophobia, facilitated by the Committee on Migrant Workers and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In October 2024, he presented his report on the role of workers' organizations in preventing contemporary forms of slavery to the General Assembly and hosted a side event with the International Trade Union Confederation.

4. In February 2025, the Special Rapporteur took part in a workshop on modern slavery, regulations and investment, hosted by Wilton Park, and in March he intervened at a panel discussion on the rights to work and social security at the fifty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council. In April, he provided testimony before the Modern Slavery Committee of the state of New South Wales, Australia. He visited Brussels in May to participate in the Europe Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum, and he was in Munich, Germany for the East Turkistan/Uighur National Summit. In June, he visited Seoul and attended the forum on forced labour in global supply chains, as a keynote speaker.

5. With regard to country visits, the Special Rapporteur visited Australia in November 2024 and Brazil in August 2025. He thanks the respective Governments for their invitations and other stakeholders for their constructive engagement.

III. International standards

6. Not all work performed by children is exploitative or abusive. Children may engage in part-time work to earn pocket money or occasionally help out their family's business outside of school hours, for example. However, international human rights and labour standards clearly set out certain conditions to be met. States must protect children from any

[1] International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2024, Trends and the Road Forward*, available from https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/child-labour-global-estimates-2024-trends-and-road-forward, p. 8.

[2] All submissions are available at https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-input-worst-forms-child-labour-taking-stock-progress-and-remaining.

work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their access to education or that is harmful to their health or their physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, in accordance with article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Employment of children in contravention of these conditions constitutes "child labour".

7. All States are under an obligation to prohibit and prevent child labour, including its worst forms. According to article 3 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), which is one of the fundamental ILO conventions and has been universally ratified by all 187 ILO member States, the worst forms of child labour refers to:

(a) 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;

(b) The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;

(c) The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;

(d) Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

8. These human rights violations are also covered by articles 32, 33, 34 and 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, by article 6 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which applies to girls, by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and by articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

9. Regionally, the following instruments touch upon various aspects of the worst forms of child labour: the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Inter-American Convention on International Traffic in Minors, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the Arab Charter on Human Rights, and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

10. According to ILO, hazardous child labour entails dangerous and/or unhealthy conditions which can result in injuries, illnesses or death, or cause long-lasting damage to children's physical or mental development.[3] The features that constitute hazardous work are stipulated in the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190):

(a) Work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse;

(b) Work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces;

(c) Work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads;

(d) Work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels or vibrations damaging to their health;

(e) Work under particularly difficult conditions, such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer.

[3] See https://www.ilo.org/topics/child-labour/what-child-labour.

11. In relation to the age of employment for children, the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) designates 15 as the minimum age for admission to employment. However, light work, which is not harmful to children's health and development and does not affect their access to education or vocational training, can be performed by children between 13 and 15. Notably, a State "whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may, after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned, where such exist, initially specify a minimum age of 14 years". However, the same Convention specifies that hazardous work should not be performed by children under the age of 18, although undertaking such work may be possible from the age of 16, provided that the children concerned receive appropriate vocational training and that their health, safety and morals are fully protected.

12. States must adopt legislative, administrative, social and educational measures in order to eradicate the worst forms of child labour. For instance, they must proscribe these conducts through their national criminal or labour laws, with proportionate penalties. The adoption and implementation of a hazardous work list, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, is another important measure to be taken.[4] These legal and regulatory frameworks must be enforced rigorously through effective investigation, prosecution and punishment. In particular, States must establish functioning labour inspection and other identification mechanisms with sufficient powers, resources and trained personnel.[5]

13. Given the transnational nature of the worst forms of child labour and the fact that they also occur in the digital environment, proactive criminal justice cooperation is needed. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, of 2000, is an important instrument in this regard, as it obliges States Parties to promote cooperation, in areas such as confiscation of criminal assets, extradition, joint investigation, transfer of criminal proceedings and wider forms of cooperation. Its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, complements the main Convention.

14. In order to protect child victims, individually tailored rehabilitation and reintegration measures that are appropriate in terms of age, gender and culture must be provided, with the primary consideration given to their best interests.[6] Children who participate in armed conflicts should be regarded primarily as victims deserving special protection and rehabilitation, in line with the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, of 2007. Similarly, the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking, of 2002, issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, stipulate that victims of human trafficking must be protected from law enforcement actions under the principle of non-punishment and without discrimination. For foreign child victims, the most favourable migration status and temporary or permanent residency should be granted without conditions – such as cooperation with the law enforcement authorities.[7]

15. In addition, access to justice and remedies for child victims must be secured without discrimination. Measures to be taken in this regard should ensure access to child-friendly information, and complaint/reporting mechanisms, and should include special arrangements during civil and criminal proceedings such as free legal aid, and paying due regard to issues such as the design of courtrooms.[8] Non-judicial mechanisms and grievance mechanisms established by businesses and employers should also be considered and utilized when

[4] ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), art. 3; and Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 20 (2016), para. 86.

[5] Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 16 (2013), para. 56; and ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81).

[6] Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 20 (2016), art. 39; ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), art. 7; and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 38 (2020), para. 40.

[7] Joint general comment No. 4 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families/No. 23 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, para. 43.

[8] Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 12 (2009), para. 34; and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 38 (2020), para. 92.

appropriate.[9] Moreover, effective remedies such as restitution, recovery, compensation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition must be guaranteed depending on the individual needs of each child victim.[10] In promoting access to justice and remedies, it is essential that their voices and concerns be effectively heard and be reflected in all decisions and processes affecting them.[11]

16. Furthermore, States must intensify their efforts to prevent child labour, particularly its worst forms. Ensuring universal access to education and vocational training is an essential first step in this regard.[12] States should also provide economic, social and other support to parents and families so that they can access just and favourable conditions of work and maintain an adequate standard of living, thereby reducing the need for their children to work. Sensitizing the general public by applying a holistic and community-based approach is equally crucial, in order to tackle social or cultural norms[13] which in some contexts may promote or condone child labour.

17. In implementing prevention measures, the overarching principle of non-discrimination must be observed strictly, and temporary special measures for children and families in a particularly vulnerable situation (e.g. Indigenous Peoples, those belonging to minority groups, those residing in rural or remote areas, migrants, displaced persons, persons with disabilities, and gender-diverse populations) should be adopted and implemented, with the allocation of adequate resources. The adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach can be beneficial for the development and implementation of preventive measures, by reflecting the voices of employers' and workers' organizations, civil society, local communities, businesses and educational institutions, as well as children and their families. These and other obligations are also affirmed in the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour, adopted by the fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, in 2022.

18. Moreover, the root causes of child labour in all its forms must be addressed. These include poverty, socioeconomic and gender inequality, intersecting forms of discrimination, and lack of access to education, to just and favourable conditions of work for parents and to social protection measures, as well as armed conflicts and other emergencies such as natural disasters or climate change. While each State should strive to address these and other drivers to the maximum of its available resources, international economic, technical and other forms of assistance must be promoted to assist those who may not have sufficient resources and capacity, in accordance with article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 8 of the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

19. With regard to businesses and employers that may facilitate or engage in child labour, including its worst forms, the Committee on Economic, Social Cultural Rights has recognized a positive duty on States to adopt a legal framework requiring businesses to exercise human rights due diligence in order to identify, prevent and mitigate the risks of human rights abuses.[14] Similarly, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has stressed the need for child rights due diligence mechanisms across their business relationships and within global operations.[15] The importance of the latter is also recognized in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. When businesses fail to act with due diligence which in turn results in actual victimization, then proportionate penalties or sanctions, such as criminal and civil sanctions, and other measures such as revocation of business licences and procurement contracts, and withdrawal of State support, should be imposed.[16]

[9] Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 16 (2013), para. 71.

[10] Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 13 (2011), para. 56; and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 38 (2020), para. 43.

[11] Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 12.

[12] Ibid., art. 28.

[13] Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019), paras. 59 and 60.

[14] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 24 (2017), para. 16.

[15] Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 16 (2013), para. 62.

[16] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 24 (2017), para. 15.

20. Finally, States must enhance their knowledge and capacity to implement more effective actions against the worst forms of child labour facilitated in cyberspace or with the use of digital technologies. An important initiative in this regard is the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime, in December 2024, which is aimed at strengthening national and international actions against cybercrimes through more effective cooperation, technical assistance and capacity-building among States Parties. In addition to obligations to enhance national and international criminal justice responses, the Convention binds States to promote the active participation of relevant private sector actors in developing and implementing prevention measures, stressing the need for a multi-stakeholder approach.

IV. Manifestations of the worst forms of child labour

21. Two in five children are said to perform hazardous work in 2024, with close to half being under the age of 15 and nearly one in five younger than age 12.[17] Hazardous work has been reported in Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Middle East, as well as Europe,[18] and can found in all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, livestock, forestry, textiles and garments, fisheries, food processing, construction, hospitality, mining, quarrying, trades, waste collection, domestic work and manufacturing. Other forms of child labour, such as forced begging, have also been reported.[19]

22. Long hours of work, often under extreme weather conditions, exposure to toxic chemicals and other environmental hazards, lack of access to food, water, and sanitation facilities, and the use of heavy or dangerous equipment and machinery, are just some examples of conditions under which many children have to work, in clear breach of the established international human rights and labour standards. Many of the sectors affected are part of the informal economy, particularly in the global South, where national labour and social protection laws are often not implemented effectively, thereby increasing the risks of exploitation and abuse.

23. Child prostitution, sex trafficking, other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, and child pornography are also widespread globally.[20] Undoubtedly, digital technologies, including social media, gaming, smartphone applications, online chat rooms and artificial intelligence, are making sexual exploitation of children much easier. According to the Childlight Global Child Security Institute, the number of victims of online sexual exploitation in 2024 amounted to 302 million.[21] Commercial sexual exploitation in cyberspace, including through the use of deepfakes, so-called "sextortion" where children are threatened or blackmailed to provide money, additional sexual materials or sexual services, and live streaming of child sexual abuse, are particularly alarming.

24. With regard to offline child sexual exploitation, several sectors, such as travel, accommodation, tourism and entertainment, including those operating informally, may be directly or indirectly involved.[22] Furthermore, during humanitarian crises, including armed

[17] ILO and UNICEF, *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2024, Trends and the Road Forward*, p. 38.

[18] Submissions by Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Honduras, Mali, Office of the Ombudsman of Argentina, HACE, International Trade Union Confederation – Bangladesh Council, Global March Against Child Labour in South America, Human Rights Watch, University of Michigan Law School, Hind Mazdoor Sabha and Tanzania Child Welfare; press summary of the conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights (2023), available at https://rm.coe.int/press-briefing-elements-conclusions-2023-eng-to-publish-2/1680aefdbb; and ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2025), available from https://www.ilo.org/resource/conference-paper/application-international-labour-standards-2025, pp. 487 and 580.

[19] Submissions by ICFAI University and Pixology Foundation for Peace, Development and Hunan Rights.

[20] Submissions by Romania, Association of Reintegration of Crimea, Corporación Opción and Mission d'intervention et de sensibilisation contre la traite des êtres humains (MIST); and see the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, Evaluation Report on Estonia (2023), para. 115.

[21] A/79/122, para. 15.

[22] Submissions by ECPAT International and the Down to Zero Alliance.

conflicts and natural disasters, children face increased risks of being subjected to sexual exploitation. Girls are the primary victims, but boys are also exploited, as are other vulnerable populations such as gender-diverse children. Although sexual exploitation of children has been criminalized worldwide, it is rarely uncovered and even more rarely prosecuted.

25. The recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts remains serious, in multiple countries. According to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 8,655 children were recruited and used in armed conflict in 2023.[23] The countries affected included Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.[24] Children in conflict settings are exposed to other forms of child labour[25] such as portering, cooking, cleaning and guarding, as well as wider human rights violations including sexual violence, death, maiming, torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment.

26. Although most children are recruited within conflict zones, children in other parts of the world can be recruited to fight in armed conflicts through the use of digital technologies. Prohibition of the recruitment and use of children is therefore a collective responsibility of States and the international community. The evolving nature of armed conflicts, with the increasing involvement of terrorist groups and criminal gangs, also requires more effective responses.

27. Finally, criminal exploitation among children raises serious concerns. Many are recruited by local, national or transnational criminal groups, and their involvement in drug production and/or trafficking and other criminal activities has been widely reported in all regions.[26] Despite the increase in criminal exploitation of children across the globe, there is limited understanding of these practices by law enforcement authorities and other frontline stakeholders. This prevents them from properly identifying, protecting and reintegrating victims and prosecuting and punishing perpetrators. There is, therefore, an acute need for in-depth research and data collection. The importance of non-punishment of children who are incited or forced to commit criminal offences should again be emphasized.

28. In terms of the profiles of child victims, certain groups of children face a heightened risk of being subjected to the worst forms of child labour. They include children living in poverty, displaced or migrant children (unaccompanied children in particular), children in street situations, children in care settings, Indigenous or minority children, children in remote and/or rural areas, gender-diverse children, children with disabilities, and currently and formerly incarcerated children. Girls are predominantly victimized in domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, which also has a clear nexus to child marriage in some settings.[27]

V. Persistent challenges in eliminating the worst forms of child labour

29. The worst forms of child labour persist due to a complex combination of political, economic, social, cultural and legal factors. For instance, inadequacy of national criminal and labour laws poses a challenge. National legal frameworks often lack comprehensive provisions capable of addressing the evolving nature of the worst forms of child labour, particularly with regard to exploitation of children facilitated in the digital space, or criminal

[23] See A/78/842-S/2024/384.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Submissions by the International Trade Union Confederation and the Global March against Child Labour and by Patricia Viseur Sellers, Jocelyn Getgen Kestenbaum and Alexandra Lily Kather.

[26] Consultation with youth leaders; and submissions by UNICEF, NGO ATINA, 4Métrica and Civil Rights Defenders, Nottingham Human Rights Law Centre, and York Centre for Applied Human Rights.

[27] Submission by Anti-Slavery International.

exploitation. The frequently lenient penalty regimes for offences relating to the worst forms of child labour in many jurisdictions have also been raised as a serious concern.[28]

30. Limited or weak law enforcement and labour inspection is an associated problem. This is due to insufficient resources, capacity, training, and effective national referral mechanisms, and to corruption. Consequently, there are limited prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators, effectively perpetuating impunity. The situation is worse in the informal sector, as national labour laws often do not extend to this sector and there is no obligation on labour inspectorates to conduct regular inspections. Undoubtedly, the lack of comprehensive data on the worst forms of child labour[29] also prevents law enforcement and other authorities from identifying perpetrators and victims.

31. Ineffective or insufficient child protection systems raise serious concerns, as they increase the vulnerability of children. Part of the problem is that stakeholders reportedly work in silos,[30] resulting in duplication of work and the wasting of already scarce resources. A multi-stakeholder approach to child protection with closer cooperation and coordination with civil society, businesses and employers, workers' organizations and other relevant actors is therefore needed. The inclusion of children, including victims and survivors of the worst forms of child labour, is essential in developing and implementing individually tailored, culture- and gender-sensitive and trauma-informed protection and support.[31]

32. A related point is insufficient access to justice and remedies for child victims. The entire process must be child-friendly, with priority consideration given to their best interests in line with established human rights standards, but this is not always done for similar reasons to those stated above. In addition, the non-punishment principle for children who are forced or incited to engage in criminal activities is not observed widely, as there are reports of child victims being detained or prosecuted[32] instead of receiving protection.

33. States must also increase their efforts in identifying and addressing the risks emanating from existing and emerging digital technologies which are used to subject children to the worst forms of child labour. Given the rapidly evolving dynamics in this area, taking actions in a timely and adequate manner is a challenge for many States. Against this backdrop, States must develop and implement appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures in closer cooperation with technology companies, experts and other relevant stakeholders, and strengthen international cooperation. At the same time, digital tools, such as blockchain technology, artificial intelligence and satellite remote sensing, are increasingly playing an important part in identifying the patterns of exploitation, perpetrators and child victims.[33] States and the international community must strive to adopt such innovative and cost-effective solutions to tackle the worst forms of child labour.

34. Many businesses still do not have sufficient understanding of child labour risks in their business operations and value chains, and of the importance of human rights due diligence.[34] Although many States have adopted or are adopting soft law instruments such as national action plans or guidelines to promote human rights due diligence, a lack of transparency and of accountability for non-compliance are persistent challenges which must be addressed.[35] There is growing support globally for stronger due diligence laws and mechanisms in order to compel businesses and employers to ensure that children are not

[28] ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2024), p. 529; and Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, evaluation reports on North Macedonia (2023), para. 103, and Latvia (2022), para. 92.

[29] Submissions by Astra – Anti-Trafficking Action, Comité contre l'esclavage moderne, and Anti-Slavery Australia.

[30] Submissions by the Centre for Child Rights and Business and by Geeta Oberoi.

[31] Submission by the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice.

[32] Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, evaluation report on France (2022), para. 132, and Sweden (2023), para. 96; and ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2024), pp. 515 and 565.

[33] See A/78/161.

[34] Submission by the International Relations Students' Association of McGill.

[35] Submission by the University of Nottingham's Human Rights Law Centre.

exploited in their business operations. Therefore, it is imperative for all States to take appropriate action in this regard.

35. In some contexts, traditional practices may actively contribute to perpetuation of the worst forms of child labour. For instance, begging for offerings in streets or working in agriculture or private homes may be mandated by religious and educational establishments.[36] A culture of tolerance or acceptance at the local and national levels, particularly for children belonging to marginalized groups,[37] has been observed in various parts of the world.[38] This highlights the need to raise awareness among the general public in order to change mindsets. In this process, the active participation of local and religious leaders, educational institutions, public service providers, civil society, businesses and workers' organizations, as well as children and their families, is essential.

36. Finally, the root causes of the worst forms of child labour must be tackled more rigorously. These include poverty, insufficient access to free education, parents' lack of access to just and favourable conditions of work and to social protection, social and gender inequality, intersecting forms of discrimination, informality of work, conflicts, natural or climate disasters, and displacement. The global demand for cheap labour and sexual services must also be addressed. At a micro level, family issues, including domestic violence, neglect, substance abuse and divorce[39] can increase children's vulnerability to labour, sexual and criminal exploitation. Hence, more robust actions are needed in these areas.

37. Factors such as a lack of prioritization of child rights and of resources, trained personnel, infrastructure and political will are preventing States from tackling these root causes of the worst forms of child labour effectively. Civil society organizations, workers' organizations and others who provide vital support to children and their families are increasingly being affected by ongoing funding cuts at the national, regional and international levels and by the shrinking civic space. There is an acute need to reverse this trend, because addressing the structural causes of the worst forms of child labour in a holistic way and with a long-term perspective is a responsibility of States and the international community.

VI. Promising practices in eradicating the worst forms of child labour

38. In order to overcome existing challenges and end the worst forms of child labour more effectively, a wide range of initiatives are being developed and implemented at the local, national, regional and international levels. This section highlights some encouraging practices in that regard.

39. An increasing number of States are adopting or amending legislative frameworks in order to strengthen responses to the worst forms of child labour. For instance, the prohibition of hazardous work among children under 18, including the creation of a hazardous work list, has been implemented in States such as Burkina Faso, the Dominican Republic, Guinea, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Sao Tome and Principe, and Sri Lanka.[40] In other areas of law, Guyana (through its Occupational Health and Safety Act 1997) and Mongolia (through its Law on Labour 1999) require employers to keep a register of employees under the age of 18, which makes the monitoring easier and can promote transparency among

[36] Submissions by l'Organisation mauritanienne pour les droits et libertés, Rights Lab and the Center for Asia Pacific Strategy; and see ILO, Reports of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2022), pp. 401, 474, 486 and 493.

[37] Submissions by the International Dalit Solidarity Network, the Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, and PRAKSIS.

[38] Submissions by Ecuador, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, RDM Tanafili Association, and Child and Youth Protection Nigeria.

[39] Submissions by Vatra Psycho-Social Center and Macedonian Young Lawyers Association.

[40] ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2023), pp. 484, 523 and 558; Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2024), pp. 490, 499 and 528; and Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2025), pp. 493, 537 and 586.

businesses. These measures are broadly in line with the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138).

40. In relation to sexual exploitation of children, Act No. 2020-1266 of 19 October 2020, of France, requires parents to obtain a licence before posting images and videos of their children online, and the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes, of the Republic of Korea, criminalizes the production and distribution of "deepfake" videos. Similarly, in Zambia, the Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Act 2021 addresses the growing problem of online grooming of children. As regards wider measures, Colombia facilitates annulment of the ownership of premises used for sexual exploitation of children, under Act No. 2197 of 2022; and Supreme Decree No. 008-2022-MINCETUR, of Peru, imposes fines on tour operators who fail to report instances of commercial sexual exploitation. Furthermore, child sex tourism is typically addressed through the extraterritorial application of national criminal law legislation to nationals who commit sexual offences abroad.

41. As regards other worst forms of child labour, Armenia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Lebanon, and the Northern Territory of Australia, prohibit the use of children in drug production and trafficking and other criminal activities,[41] and exploitation of children in armed conflicts constitutes a part of the human trafficking offences in Afghanistan (the Law on Combating Abduction and Trafficking, 2008), Ethiopia (the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation, 2015), Kyrgyzstan (the Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons, 2005), Nigeria (the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015), Tajikistan (the Law on Counteracting Trafficking in Persons and Providing Support to Victims, 2014) and Uganda (the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2009). While these criminal law provisions constitute a step in the right direction, it is of critical importance that they are effectively enforced.

42. Given the transnational nature of some worst forms of child labour, cross-border criminal justice cooperation is essential. The majority of States have adopted legislative and regulatory frameworks on international criminal justice cooperation[42] and some concrete examples are worth mentioning. In 2019, the Philippines established the Internet Crimes against Children Center, with support from Australia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the civil society organization International Justice Mission, which has been instrumental in rescuing child victims of online sexual exploitation and prosecuting offenders.[43] Joint investigations into child trafficking and other forms of exploitation are regularly carried out among law enforcement authorities of the European Union member States.[44] Furthermore, intergovernmental bodies such as INTERPOL play an important role in proactively coordinating international criminal justice cooperation among law enforcement authorities.

43. The implementation of the non-punishment principle is also a good practice. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 of the United Kingdom protects children who commit criminal offences from prosecution when they are victims of human trafficking. Similar provisions exist in national legislation in Brunei Darussalam, Egypt, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Malaysia, Mozambique, the Philippines, Qatar and Romania.[45] So-called "safe harbor" laws, which are implemented in various states of the United States of America, protect children involved in prostitution from prosecution.[46] With

[41] ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2022), p. 484; Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2023), pp. 424 and 493; and Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2024), pp. 481 and 495.

[42] See https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/v3/sherloc/legdb/.

[43] ECPAT International, Summary paper on online child sexual exploitation (2023), p. 14.

[44] Eurojust, Eurojust report on trafficking in human beings (2021).

[45] Marika McAdam, Implementation of the non-punishment principle for victims of human trafficking in ASEAN member States (2022), pp. 34–39.

[46] Shared Hope International, Safe harbor laws fact sheet (2023).

regard to the treatment of child soldiers, States are increasingly refraining from prosecution and opting for restorative justice measures.[47]

44. As to the responsibility of businesses and employers, there is an impetus towards stronger human rights due diligence. National legislation in Australia (the Modern Slavery Act, 2018), Canada (the Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act, 2023) and the United Kingdom (the Modern Slavery Act, 2015), and in the State of California (the Transparency in Supply Chains Act, 2012), impose reporting obligations on businesses of certain sizes and revenues in order to promote transparency in supply chains. Others have adopted mandatory human rights due diligence laws. The Child Labour Due Diligence Act, 2020, of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, is a good example specifically targeting child labour, and other countries in Europe, including France (with the Corporate Duty of Vigilance Law, 2017), Germany (with the Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations in Supply Chains, 2021) and Norway (with the Transparency Act, 2022) have established similar arrangements. At the level of the European Union, the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive was adopted in 2024, which will be applicable to all European Union member States in due course, although concerns have been expressed over the omnibus package currently under consideration by the European Union institutions to modify the Directive. This would water down some of the key obligations.

45. While the move towards mandatory human rights due diligence is an important step forward, the current arrangements in place in some jurisdictions should be treated with caution. The legal obligations mainly apply to companies with larger revenues and a larger workforce, and exclude small and medium-sized enterprises further down the supply chains in countries of the global South, where in some contexts the worst forms of child labour are particularly prevalent. The coverage of value chains also varies, with some legal obligations being applicable to entire value chains and others being limited to direct suppliers. However, the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights apply to all businesses regardless of their size, and it is important for States, and for large businesses with more resources, expertise and capacity, to provide necessary guidance and support to small and medium-sized enterprises so that they can prevent child labour more effectively.

46. There are other ways to compel businesses to take action. An import ban on goods produced as a result of child and forced labour is a case in point. This is already implemented through domestic legislative frameworks in Canada, Mexico and the United States as part of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement of 2020. The European Union has adopted a similar law, Regulation (EU) 2024/3015 on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market, which is to be incorporated into the domestic legal frameworks of all member States by the end of 2027. Brazil, in turn, publishes a register of employers (also known as a dirty list of employers) who have been found to engage in labour exploitation analogous to slavery, as originally mandated by Decree No. 540/2004, with consequences such as enhanced inspection and monitoring, fines, and restrictions on access to public and private funding.

47. There are some other encouraging examples of due diligence undertaken by businesses. For instance, in Argentina, the Due Diligence System for the Prevention of Child Labour and the Promotion of Education is implemented by three business chambers.[48] Implementation of bottom-up due diligence with the proactive involvement of local actors in the mining sector in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in farming in Ethiopia also seem to have had a positive impact on the identification of risks in invisible and undetected supply chains.[49]

48. In the area of online sexual exploitation of children, preventive action by online service providers needs to be stepped up, for instance through age-appropriate design and by ensuring rapid reporting and response. In this regard, States such as China (through the Regulation on the Protection of Minors in Cyberspace, 2023), Kenya (through the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, 2018), Singapore (through the Online Criminal Harms Act,

[47] Maria Stefania Cataleta, "The prohibition of prosecution of child soldiers: a desirable emerging rule of customary law", *Chinese Journal of International Law*, vol. 21, No. 4 (January 2023).

[48] Submission by Desarrollo y Autogestión.

[49] Submission by FiftyEight.

2023), Thailand (through the Digital Platform Services Law, 2022) and Viet Nam (through Decree No. 147/2024/ND-CP) impose duties on online service providers to prevent online child sexual exploitation, including pornography and grooming, by means of ongoing moderation of and removal of harmful content and cooperation with law enforcement authorities. The Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children also supports these measures.[50]

49. When businesses are directly involved in the worst forms of child labour or fail to prevent risks through robust human rights due diligence and other mechanisms, imposition of criminal liability may be regarded as appropriate. In many jurisdictions, corporate criminal liability has been recognized with penalties such as fines, imprisonment of employees or wider measures to restrict business operations. The examples include Law No. 15 of 2011 on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (in Qatar), the Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking Act 2013 (in South Africa) and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000 (in the United States). Criminal liability may also be established through associated criminal conduct such as corruption and bribery, such as in Costa Rica (Law (No. 9699) for Criminal Liability of Legal Entities on Domestic Bribery, Transnational Bribery and Other Crimes, 2019) and Malaysia (the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009).

50. In relation to institutional frameworks, a large number of States have established multi-agency national committees or commissions responsible for tackling all forms of child labour. These typically consist of relevant government departments or ministries in areas such as justice, employment and child protection, facilitate interministerial coordination, and provide political oversight over actions against child labour. Examples include the Interministerial Committee for Monitoring the Issue of Child Labour in Artisanal Mines (in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), the Inter-Secretarial Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Working Adolescents of Permitted Age (in Mexico) and the Inter-institutional Commission against the Abuse and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (in the Dominican Republic). It is important to carefully examine and regularly monitor, including through data collection, whether these interministerial bodies are having a positive impact on the ground.

51. Aside from political oversight or coordinating bodies, there are other specialized entities or mechanisms for the prevention of child labour and the protection of victims. Belize, Jordan and Lesotho[51] have dedicated units or teams focusing on child labour within labour inspectorates. In the area of criminal justice, India has Fast Track Courts for Child Sexual Offences,[52] and Specialized Courts for Childhood and Adolescence exist at the regional level in Brazil.[53] In the United Kingdom, Independent Child Trafficking Guardians, who are trained to provide advice to child victims, represent their best interests before criminal justice processes and other public authorities.[54]

52. Many States have also strengthened identification of the worst forms of child labour and of its victims. Facilitation of reporting by victims and other stakeholders through free telephone lines and the Internet is a widespread practice,[55] and many States have established dedicated identification and monitoring mechanisms, as can be seen in Albania, Argentina, Cameroon, Colombia, Peru and the United Republic of Tanzania.[56] Other mechanisms for identification are devised and implemented with the proactive involvement of civil society,

[50] A/79/122, para. 78.

[51] ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2023), pp. 426 and 508; and A/HRC/WG.6/45/JOR/1, para. 144.

[52] A/HRC/WG.6/41/IND/1, para. 116.

[53] Submission by the Facts and Norms Institute and the Slave Labour and Human Trafficking Clinic of the Federal University of Minas Gerais.

[54] Submission by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

[55] Submission by Building and Wood Workers' International; and see ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2025), pp. 565 and 623; and A/HRC/WG.6/48/EGY/1, para. 88.

[56] Submissions by the General Confederation of Labour, of Argentina, and by the Central Autónoma de Trabajadores, of Peru; ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2025), pp. 501, 512 and 613; and Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2022), p. 380.

workers' organizations, businesses and international organizations. The Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, and the Accelerating Child Labour Actions in Agriculture Project in Indonesia, as well as DIGICHILD developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, are encouraging practices in this regard. [57] In addition to identification and protection, these mechanisms are essential in collecting data on the worst forms of child labour.

53. With regard to access to justice and remedies, appropriate arrangements for child victims are increasingly being introduced. Child-friendly interview rooms in police stations and courts[58] constitute promising examples in this regard. In various countries in Europe, so-called *barnahus* (children's houses) are utilized to obtain testimonies from children while simultaneously providing them with medical, psychological and other appropriate support.[59] Interviewing via video link or video recording to avoid confrontation with perpetrators, or in the presence of a psychologist, is mandated by many States,[60] and free legal aid and/or compensation for child victims are also provided in various jurisdictions.[61]

54. For the rehabilitation and reintegration of child victims of the worst forms of child labour, the Special Rapporteur received information on promising practices in providing a variety of services, such as safe and secure accommodation, medical and psychological assistance, legal or financial support, and education or training. In general, community-based, bottom-up protection programmes with the proactive involvement of local actors, including survivors and their families, have the potential to generate meaningful change. In many settings, non-governmental stakeholders, including civil society, workers' organizations and other service providers, are at the forefront of providing community-based, trauma-informed rehabilitation and reintegration services. However, many are under increasing funding pressure and are not able to provide necessary services to child victims, including due to shrinking civic space. It is therefore critical that their work is adequately supported by States and the international community.

55. For the prevention of the worst forms of child labour and the protection of victims, digital technologies are increasingly being used. Paraguay has digitalized the register of working adolescents, which now generates real-time data on their activities and hours of work and on enterprises employing adolescents, contributing to a gradual reduction in the amount of hazardous work carried out by children.[62] In Italy, tools including blockchain technology for the traceability of supply chains in the agricultural and textile sectors, and artificial intelligence systems for online monitoring and early identification of labour abuse, are being piloted.[63] Other initiatives, such as the use of community-based child labour monitoring systems, digital reporting tools and community watch groups, have been implemented in Bangladesh,[64] and the General Directorate of National Security in Morocco introduced the "E-blagh" digital interactive platform in 2024 – a reporting mechanism for online crimes, including exploitation of children.[65]

[57] Submissions by Saskia Bricmont, Member of the European Parliament; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; and International Cocoa Initiative.

[58] Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, evaluation reports on Czechia (2024), para. 239, Georgia (2021), para. 114, and Lithuania (2024), para. 134.

[59] Submission by Norway; and Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, evaluation reports on Denmark (2021), para. 142, Hungary (2024), para. 138, and Slovenia (2023), para. 133.

[60] Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, evaluation reports on Belgium (2022), para. 154, Armenia (2022), para. 130, Luxembourg (2022), para. 130, and Malta (2021), para. 118.

[61] ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2025), p. 597; and Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, evaluation reports on Italy (2023), para. 163, Romania (2021), para. 151, and Spain (2023), para. 160.

[62] ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2024), p. 536.

[63] Submission by Unione Italiana del Lavoro.

[64] Submission by International Trade Union Confederation – Bangladesh Council.

[65] Submission by Morocco.

56. For wider prevention of the worst forms of child labour, a number of encouraging initiatives can be observed globally. To encourage children to stay in school, scholarships, free school kits and meals have been provided in Burkina Faso, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador.[66] Financial assistance to children is also provided to prevent school dropout. In this regard, cash transfers have been facilitated for refugee children in Türkiye, working children in Costa Rica and disadvantaged children in Zimbabwe.[67] In addition, together with international partners, Egypt has implemented flexible education for children engaged in labour, ranging from community schools to mobile classrooms to evening classes, which has helped reduce dropout rates.[68]

57. Awareness-raising on the worst forms of child labour among pupils is also an important preventive tool. In the United Republic of Tanzania, there are trafficking in persons school clubs in primary and secondary schools to raise awareness among children of trafficking in persons for the purposes of labour and/or sexual exploitation.[69] Egypt promotes educational activities for students enrolled in textile schools,[70] and Germany has conducted social media campaigns targeted at children and young people to prevent them from being victimized in human trafficking.[71] It is encouraging that a multi-stakeholder approach is taken in many cases, where the local and national authorities work closely with businesses, educational institutions and civil society as well as with survivors of the worst forms of child labour and their families.

58. With regard to reducing poverty, a root cause of the worst forms of child labour, financial assistance is provided to vulnerable families in States including Indonesia (Family Hope Programme) and the Philippines (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme).[72] Universal child benefits reportedly also contribute to the reduction of child poverty and are provided in Austria, Oman, Panama and Suriname, and in the Cook Islands, for instance.[73] Other examples include microfinance, loans or credits to promote entrepreneurship among women in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire,[74] access to non-contributory or universal pension benefits in Mexico and Thailand, and social health insurance in China, Pakistan and Rwanda.[75] Other businesses are investing in community projects that are aimed at ensuring the livelihoods of vulnerable families in order to reduce instances of child labour, including its worst forms.[76]

59. On the other hand, many States are taking steps to formalize the informal economy, where most instances of child labour occur. Examples of encouraging practice in this area include, but are not limited to, legal protection for domestic workers in France, Morocco, the Philippines and South Africa, formal registration of informal businesses through tax and other incentives in Chile, Seychelles and Türkiye, the introduction of simplified tax systems in Colombia, the Russian Federation and Uruguay, and financial inclusion of informal

[66] Submission by Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras de las Américas; and see ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2025), pp. 495 and 538.

[67] Submissions by UNICEF and Costa Rica; and ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2025), p. 629.

[68] Submission by the York Centre for Applied Human Rights.

[69] ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2025), pp. 612 and 613.

[70] Submission by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights.

[71] Submission by Germany.

[72] ILO, Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2023), p. 491; and Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (2024), p. 543.

[73] ILO, The promise of child benefits: the foundational policy for economic and social development (February 2024).

[74] Submissions by Côte d'Ivoire and the Migration Youth and Children Platform.

[75] ILO and UNICEF, *The Role of Social Protection in the Elimination of Child Labour* (2022), pp. 44 and 47.

[76] A/HRC/54/30/Add.1, paras. 23 and 25; and A/HRC/57/46/Add.2, para. 22.

workers in Angola, Ireland and Malawi.[77] These measures should, however, be accompanied by more robust labour inspection in the informal economy.

60. Furthermore, the establishment of "child labour free zones" or "child-friendly villages" is worth highlighting. These aim to encourage children to access education, and emerging evidence suggests that there is a positive impact on the reduction of all forms of child labour. This can be observed in Ghana, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.[78] These constitute another promising example of a multi-stakeholder initiative with the proactive involvement of public authorities, civil society, workers' organizations and businesses. Similarly, the beauty and cosmetics industry collaborates with a civil society organization in India to enrol children in 500 villages in schools.[79]

61. The role of businesses in preventing child labour also deserves recognition. The Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Associations of the Private Business Sector has provided scholarships and free Internet access to children in Santa Cruz Canton to enable their access to education, including online schooling.[80] A code of conduct adopted within the tourism industry has become an important tool in raising awareness among tour, accommodation and hospitality operators and reducing commercial sexual exploitation of children in various parts of the world, despite its voluntary nature.[81] In Argentina, the Network of Companies Against Child Labour contributes to the elimination child labour, including through the certification of companies that audit their supply chains.[82] The "Lantern" programme of the Tech Coalition, a global alliance of technology companies, enables companies to share information about activities and accounts involved in child sexual exploitation and abuse.[83] These industry-led initiatives are commendable.

62. Finally, promising initiatives are being implemented at the regional and international levels. At the international level, Alliance 8.7 is a global partnership of States, and international organizations such as ILO and the International Organization for Migration, as well as civil society, workers' organizations and businesses, that aim to promote effective implementation of target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Among other things, Alliance 8.7 fosters collaboration among key stakeholders to promote coordinated actions against forced and child labour. The WeProtect Global Alliance, consisting of 100 Governments, 120 civil society organizations, 80 private companies and 10 international organizations, has also been instrumental in tackling online sexual exploitation of children through collaboration on research, knowledge exchange and policy advocacy and change.[84] There are also other initiatives, such as the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture, the Global Digital Compact and the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers, which continue to play an important role in preventing all forms of child labour.

63. Regionally, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations adopted the Road Map on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 2020, which sets out concrete actions to be implemented by ASEAN member States in areas such as promotion of good governance, capacity-building for public authorities and protection of child victims. The Economic Community of West African States has created a dedicated Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, and the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative represents a joint effort between governments, workers and employers to become the first region without child labour, by means of inter-institutional collaborations in the areas of prevention and protection. In addition, bilateral agreements have been concluded and

[77] See A/77/163.
[78] Submissions by Action against Child Exploitation and JARAK; and see A/HRC/51/26/Add.1, para. 17.
[79] Submission by ICFAI University.
[80] A/HRC/54/30/Add.1, para. 25.
[81] A/HRC/46/31/Add.1, para. 18; and A/HRC/49/51/Add.1, para. 20.
[82] Submission by Fundación para la Democracia.
[83] See https://www.technologycoalition.org/newsroom/announcing-lantern.
[84] See https://www.weprotect.org/.

implemented by some States, with a view to strengthening law enforcement and other forms of collaboration.[85]

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions and the way forward

64. **States and the international community made a firm commitment to eradicate child labour, including its worst forms, by 2025, in target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, this objective is far from achieved, and there is an urgent need to step up action. Globally, a large number of children continue to work under hazardous conditions, in numerous sectors of the economy, in contravention of international human rights and labour standards. Sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as exploitation in criminal activities, including in the digital environment, are also a pressing concern, as are the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.**

65. **Significant challenges remain in effectively protecting children from child labour. Criminal and labour law responses, both in terms of legislative frameworks and their implementation, remain insufficient, and globally, children are not receiving adequate protection, assistance and support. To prevent child labour, including its worst forms, it is imperative that States address the root causes more effectively, individually and through international cooperation. Relevant measures in this regard include ensuring access to education for all children, strengthening child protection systems and social and economic support for parents, families and communities, addressing intersecting forms of discrimination, and implementing human rights due diligence for businesses.**

66. **A variety of promising initiatives are being developed and implemented at the local, national and international levels to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. Increasingly, community-based, multi-stakeholder approaches are being adopted, with the active participation of relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. This is an essential step in the right direction, as it allows the maximization of limited resources and promotes a division of tasks based on individual capacity, expertise and experience. However, it is vital that children, including those with lived experience of the worst forms of child labour, are actively included in designing the laws, policies and services that affect them.**

B. Recommendations

1. To States

Legislative and policy frameworks and their implementation

(a) **Adopt and implement all relevant human rights, humanitarian and labour standards, including the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Durban Call for Action on the Elimination of Child Labour, in order to eliminate all forms of child labour;**

(b) **Adopt and implement a national action plan to eradicate child labour, including its worst forms, and allocate adequate resources for implementation;**

(c) **Strengthen criminal justice responses by regularly reviewing and updating relevant legal frameworks, including on exploitation of children in cyberspace or their criminal exploitation;**

[85] Submissions by Ecuador, the International Trade Union Confederation and the Global March against Child Labour.

(d) **Enhance international criminal justice cooperation;**

(e) **Strengthen the regulation of the digital environment – including artificial intelligence – which is used to recruit, traffic and exploit children. Work closely with technology companies and other experts in this regard;**

(f) **Prohibit the recruitment of children for use in armed conflicts, and ensure child protection, including in high-risk settings;**

(g) **Promote restorative – as opposed to retributive – justice for children who take part in armed conflicts, by treating them primarily as victims;**

(h) **Ensure, in law and in practice, that children who are victims of human trafficking and of other forms of exploitation are not prosecuted and punished;**

(i) **Strengthen, through legislative and other appropriate means, human rights due diligence that integrates child rights among businesses and employers;**

(j) **Provide adequate guidance and support to businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to strengthen their capacity to implement human rights due diligence more effectively;**

(k) **Rigorously enforce civil, criminal and other appropriate penalties against businesses and employers that engage in child labour, in all its forms;**

(l) **Build the capacity of law enforcement and labour authorities, as well as other frontline public service providers, through regular training and awareness-raising. Allocate adequate resources for them to be able to identify, prosecute and punish perpetrators and protect child victims;**

(m) **Adopt and regularly update a list of hazardous work to be prohibited;**

(n) **Establish and enforce the minimum age for employment, with the minimum age for hazardous work set at 18 years, in line with the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138);**

(o) **Improve labour inspection, particularly in the informal economy, by utilizing innovative tools and in collaboration with employers' and workers' organizations, businesses and civil society;**

(p) **Facilitate the meaningful participation of children and parents in decision-making processes that affect them, including the design of policies and programmes aimed at eliminating child labour.**

Protection of child victims

(a) **Strengthen national referral or identification mechanisms by having dedicated and trained personnel focusing on the prevention of child labour and on victims;**

(b) **Devise and implement individually tailored, age-, gender- and culturally sensitive and trauma-informed rehabilitation and reintegration measures, for victims of all forms of child labour. Allocate adequate resources to this end;**

(c) **Provide adequate support to civil society, workers' organizations and other service providers that are at the forefront of protecting children from child labour;**

(d) **Ensure that child victims and survivors and their families can actively participate in the design and implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration measures;**

(e) **Establish child-friendly access to justice and remedies, including adequate reporting mechanisms.**

Prevention of the worst forms of child labour

(a) **Secure access to universal, quality and free education for all children, at least until the minimum age for work, without discrimination, through the provision of incentives to children and their families, such as scholarships, free school meals and flexible learning environments and opportunities. Temporary special measures for particularly vulnerable children should be implemented where needed;**

(b) **Strengthen the overall child protection systems to prevent vulnerable children from being drawn into all forms of child labour;**

(c) **Strengthen economic and social assistance to parents and families, through measures including cash transfers, universal child benefits and health coverage, subsidized or free childcare, and food programmes, as well as support in the areas of employment and affordable housing;**

(d) **In collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, establish child labour-free zones and child-friendly villages to enhance children's access to education and other support and prevent them from being drawn into labour, sexual and criminal exploitation;**

(e) **Formalize the informal economy as expeditiously as possible;**

(f) **Address the culture of acceptance of child labour, including its worst forms, through community-based interventions with the meaningful participation of local and faith leaders, children, parents, schools, workers' organizations and civil society;**

(g) **Regularly collect and analyse disaggregated data on child labour, particularly its worst forms, with a view to enhancing the understanding of it and implementing appropriate responses by relevant stakeholders;**

(h) **Tackle the root causes of child labour, such as poverty, lack of access to education and decent work for parents and for children above the minimum age, discrimination and social exclusion, individually and through international cooperation and technical assistance;**

(i) **Implement a multi-stakeholder approach for the prevention of all forms of child labour.**

2. To businesses

(a) **Implement human rights due diligence in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, with due regard paid to the rights of the child and the prevention of child labour in all its forms;**

(b) **Cooperate fully with law enforcement and labour authorities in order to identify instances of child labour and protect child victims more effectively;**

(c) **Establish effective and child-friendly identification and grievance mechanisms and provide adequate remedies, including compensation;**

(d) **Pay living wages to all workers in order to prevent their children from being subjected to child labour, particularly its worst forms;**

(e) **Support small and medium-sized enterprises in value chains so that they can implement human rights due diligence effectively;**

(f) **Provide wider support to families and communities through community development programmes and assistance.**