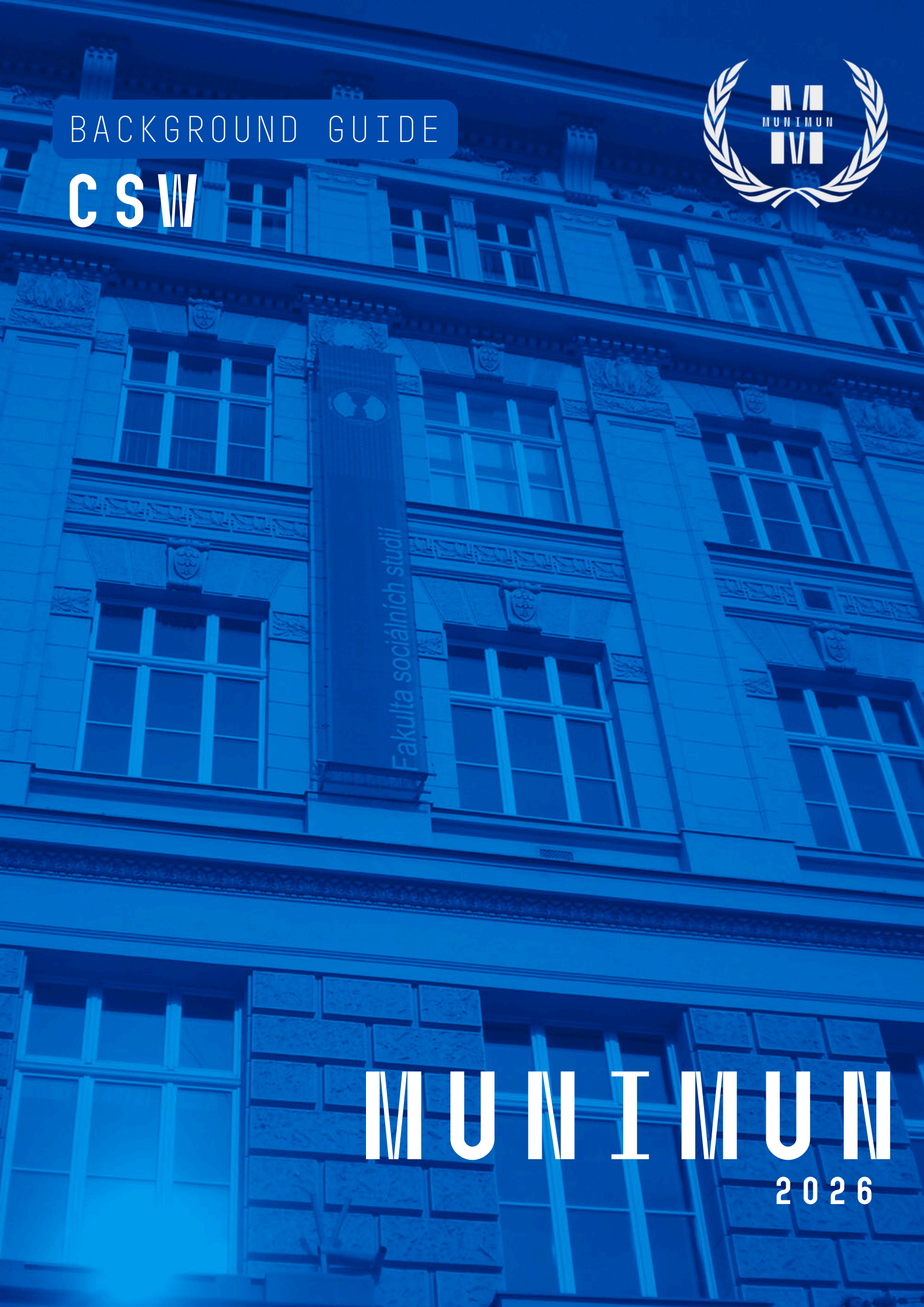
BACKGROUND GUIDE

CSW



MUNIMUN

2026

Letter from the Secretariat

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 2026 edition of the Masaryk University Model United Nations Conference. As Secretary General, it is an immense privilege to witness the incredible passion and dedication each of you will bring to this conference.

As our motto suggests, our aim for this year is to help delegates lead, think, and be inspired. In accordance with this goal, we have curated a diverse selection of committees and topics that ensure heated debate and the need for compromise. We hope that each delegate can take advantage of the unique space that MUNs bring, one where ideas are tested, diplomacy is practiced, and perspectives are broadened.

On behalf of the entire MUNIMUN team, I wish you the best of luck in your preparations and sincerely hope you have fun at the end of the day.

Do not forget that we are here to help ensure that your experience at MUNIMUN is the best that it can be. Should you have any questions, comments, concerns, or any other statements, please do not hesitate to contact me, your chairs, or the general MUNIMUN email.

I look forward to seeing the energy you bring to this conference and the lasting memories you will create.

Best wishes,

Kerem Efe Özen

Secretary General

Letter from the chair

Dear Delegates,

Hiii! My name is Veronika, and I am from Ukraine. I am currently in my second term of the Global Challenges program. This program has helped me better understand how the world and its social systems function, while also allowing me to engage with the global issues of our time.

Believing that one of the most powerful long-term solutions to many global challenges is education, I hope to work with educational policies in the future. I am especially interested in how education can prevent and solve global problems and empower communities, particularly in vulnerable and conflict-affected regions.

I joined the MUN team not only to gain my first experience as a member of an academic team, but also because I truly wanted to help create a meaningful conference experience for you. Model United Nations offers a unique space where thoughtful debate and collaboration come together, and I am excited to be part of a team that is building such an environment.

Living and studying in Brno has been an enriching experience for me. The city's international atmosphere has made it a place where ideas from all over the world can meet.

For this conference, I hope you will challenge your perspectives, deepen your research skills, and engage in respectful and creative discussions. Most importantly, I hope this experience opens new horizons for you, helps develop your critical thinking, and leaves you with great memories, new friends, and future colleagues.

I am very much looking forward to meeting all of you. Wishing you an inspiring and rewarding conference experience!

Warm regards,
Veronika
Main Chair, CSW

Committee overview

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated exclusively to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was established in 1946 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as one of its functional commissions, during a period when women's rights were starting to be formally incorporated into the United Nations system.

The current structure of the Commission involves 45 Member States, elected by ECOSOC for a four-year term and represented in a balanced manner based on geographical distribution, representing each continent. In the international system, the CSW is a norm-setting and advisory body to ECOSOC, thus, it does not have enforcement powers but plays a key role in setting global norms, providing policy guidance, and coordinating activities on gender equality in the UN system. Its activities are closely integrated with UN system bodies dealing with development, human rights, and peace and security, with UN Women providing the secretariat for the Commission.

The mandate of the CSW includes assessing progress on women's rights, pinpointing areas where progress is being hindered, and developing policy recommendations to governments and UN bodies. It is charged with reviewing the implementation of core international frameworks on gender equality. One of the major milestones of the Commission was reached in 1996, when ECOSOC expanded its mandate and gave the CSW a prominent role in monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995. This was a turning point towards a more systematic and accountability-focused approach to gender equality in the UN.

The CSW holds an annual meeting in March at the UN Headquarters, lasting two weeks. Each meeting centers on a priority theme, agreed on in advance by Member States; in the 2026 meeting, the priority theme is dedicated to "Strengthening access to justice for all women and girls." Recent activities on the Beijing+30 review show the current focus of the CSW, including a growing attention to the prevention of violence against women, evidence-informed decision-making, national action plans, survivor-centered support services, and the role of women's rights organizations in promoting sustainable change.

Key Terms and Definitions

Topic A

Developing Regions – In the context of this committee and the Global Programme, this refers to countries with lower levels of industrialization and income, and higher rates of poverty. This includes 12 "high-burden" focus countries: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen, and Zambia (UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, 2024).

Prevalence – This is the percentage of people in a specific group who were married as children. It helps us understand the level of risk in a country.

Burden – This is the total number of people married as children. For example, India has a high burden because it is home to one-third of all child brides in the world, even though the percentage (prevalence) of girls getting married there is decreasing (UNICEF, 2023).

Informal Unions – This is when a couple lives together as if they are married, but they have not had a legal or religious ceremony. These are very common in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the rates of child marriage have not changed in 25 years (UNICEF, 2023).

The Polycrisis – This term describes several major global problems happening at the same time, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and armed conflict. These problems make life harder for poor families, who may then choose child marriage as a way to cope with financial stress (UNICEF, 2023).

Child marriage – This is any formal marriage or informal union where at least one of the parties is under the age of 18.

Topic B

Sexual violence – Acts of a sexual nature carried out through force, coercion, or abuse of power, including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, and related acts (ICRC, 2016).

Gender-based violence (GBV) – Violence directed at individuals based on gender roles, expectations, or inequality, resulting in physical, sexual, or psychological harm (OSCE, n.d.).

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) – A broad category combining sexual violence and gender-based discrimination, including rape, trafficking, forced pregnancy, and sexual exploitation (OSCE, n.d.).

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) – Sexual violence occurring in the context of armed conflict, often as part of broader patterns of abuse such as intimidation, torture, or control (UN, 2024).

Coercive environment – Situations in conflict (e.g. detention, displacement, dependency on armed actors) where individuals cannot give genuine consent due to fear or lack of alternatives (ICRC, 2016)

Displacement – The forced movement of people due to conflict, increasing vulnerability to exploitation and violence (UN, 2024).

Humanitarian corridors – Designated routes or arrangements intended to allow

safe passage of civilians, humanitarian aid, and medical assistance during armed conflict (McDougal, 2025).

Rule of law – The principle that all individuals and institutions, including the state, are accountable to laws that are publicly established, equally enforced, and independently adjudicated (UN, 2023).

Stigma - Social stigma refers to negative attitudes and discrimination faced by survivors of sexual violence, which may result in exclusion, underreporting, and limited access to medical, legal, and psychosocial support (UN, 2024; ICRC, n.d.).

Retaliation- An action taken to harm or punish someone in response to a perceived wrongdoing (Oxford, 2026).

BACKGROUND GUIDE

CSW

TOPIC A:

PREVENTING CHILD MARRIAGE FOR GIRLS IN DEVELOPING REGIONS

Preventing Child Marriage for Girls in Developing Regions

Background

Defining the issue

What is Child Marriage?

Child marriage is any formal marriage or informal union where at least one of the parties is under the age of 18. While it can happen to both boys and girls, it affects girls more frequently and more severely. It is considered a violation of a child's rights because it often happens without their full and free consent and interrupts their development.

According to UNICEF (2023), about 640 million girls and women alive today were married when they were children. In the last ten years, the percentage of young women married before 18 has dropped from 23% to 19%. However, this progress is slow. If the world continues at this speed, it will take another 300 years to completely end the practice. To reach the United Nations target of ending child marriage by 2030, progress needs to happen 20 times faster than it is now (UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, 2024).

Why the Issue Matters Internationally

Impact on Education and the Economy

Education is one of the strongest ways to prevent child marriage. If every girl finished secondary school, child marriage would drop by an estimated 66% (UNICEF Innocenti, 2024). When girls are married young, they usually stop going to school. This means they are less likely to earn an income later in life, which keeps their families and their countries in poverty.

Impact on Health

Child marriage is closely linked to early pregnancy. Data shows that 76% of first births to girls under the age of 18 happen within a marriage (UNICEF, 2023). For girls aged 15 to 19, complications during pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death globally. Early marriage also increases the risk of girls experiencing violence or contracting diseases like HIV.

Historical Background

Child marriage is an age-old practice that has existed for centuries across many different cultures. Historically, it was not viewed as a global problem or a rights violation, but rather as a social tool used by families to handle survival in difficult environments (UNICEF, 2023). In many developing regions, families historically used early marriage for several reasons. Marriage was often a way to create strong bonds between families or tribes. For very poor families, marrying off a daughter meant one fewer child to feed and, in some cultures, the receipt of a "bride price" or dowry to help the rest of the family survive. In areas with high rates of violence or instability, parents historically believed that a husband could provide more protection for their daughter than the family could alone.

Key Historical Developments

For a long time, the international community stayed away from this issue, viewing it as a private family matter or a local religious custom. However, the focus shifted during the late 20th century:

The 1995 Beijing Watershed Moment: The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was the most important historical turning point. For the first time, world leaders officially recognized "the girl-child" as a specific group with unique risks. This moved child marriage from a "local tradition" to a "global political priority."

The Data Revolution (Early 2000s): Historically, child marriage was "invisible" because it was rarely recorded. Over the last 25 years, the launch of large-scale household surveys by UNICEF and United Nations Population Fund changed the problem. The data proved that child marriage was not a rare event, but a massive global phenomenon affecting hundreds of millions of girls (UNICEF, 2023).

Moments that Reframed the Issue

The Sustainable Development Goals (2015)

The most significant reframing happened in 2015 when the United Nations included SDG Target 5.3. This gave the world a hard deadline: the year 2030. It transformed child marriage from a social issue into a "global development emergency" that every UN member state is now required to report on.

The COVID-19 Pandemic (2020)

The pandemic was a major historical setback. Before 2020, child marriage rates were falling steadily. When schools closed and economies crashed, the progress made over the previous 20 years was threatened. Experts estimate that the pandemic put an additional 10 million girls at risk of marriage who would have otherwise been safe (UNICEF, 2023).

International Framework

The international framework for ending child marriage is built on several legal agreements that protect the rights of children and women. These treaties set the standards that member states are expected to follow:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): This foundational document states that marriage should be entered into only with the "free and full consent" of the intending spouses. It establishes that no one should be forced into a union against their will.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): This is the most widely supported human rights treaty. It defines a child as anyone under 18 and requires states to protect children from all forms of exploitation and harmful practices.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): This treaty requires governments to ensure that women and men have the same rights to choose a spouse and enter into marriage. It specifically targets gender-based discrimination in family life.

Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962): This specific agreement focuses on ensuring that all marriages are registered by a competent authority and that states set a minimum legal age for marriage (United Nations General Assembly, 2024).

United Nations Resolutions and the CSW

The Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations General Assembly regularly pass resolutions to keep child marriage a political priority:

UNGA Resolutions: Every two years, the General Assembly adopts a resolution specifically on "Child, Early and Forced Marriage." These resolutions, such as the one from the 79th Session (2024), urge states to remove legal loopholes, such as "parental consent" exceptions, that allow girls to be married before age 18.

CSW Agreed Conclusions: The CSW produces "Agreed Conclusions" which are policy guides for governments. For example, during the 68th session (CSW68) in 2024, the international community renewed its commitment to ending child marriage as part of the broader goal of empowering all women and girls (UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, 2024).

Previous Approaches and Policy Responses

Initial Focus on Legal Reform: Early attempts focused mostly on passing laws to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18. While many countries passed these laws, they were often not enforced in rural or developing regions because they clashed with local traditions or religious laws (CGPA, 2017).

Shift to Social Norms and Education: When it became clear that laws alone were not enough, global strategies shifted. Programs began to focus on keeping girls in school and changing community attitudes.

The Global Programme (2016–2030): The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme represents the current "joint" approach. It works in 12 high-burden countries to coordinate health, education, and legal services. It focuses on Gender-Transformative Approaches, which try to change the power dynamics that make girls vulnerable in the first place (UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, 2024).

Economic Support: Newer attempts include "cash transfer" programs. These provide financial help to poor families on the condition that their daughters stay in school, directly addressing poverty as a driver of child marriage (UNICEF Innocenti, 2024).

Current State of the Issue

Major Trends and Patterns

Recent data shows several clear patterns in how child marriage is happening today:

The Wealth Gap: Progress has not been equal for everyone. In many developing regions, the decline in child marriage has mostly benefited girls from wealthier families. Girls from the poorest households are four times more likely to be married as children than girls from the richest households (UNICEF, 2023).

Informal Unions: In some regions, "marriage" is not a legal ceremony but an informal agreement to live together. These unions are harder for governments to track and stop, and in many places, they are becoming more common than formal marriages (UNICEF, 2023).

Regional Differences

South Asia: This region has made the most progress. In the last decade, the risk of a girl getting married dropped from 46% to 26%. However, because the population is so large, South Asia still has the highest number of child brides. India alone accounts for one-third of the world's child brides (UNICEF, 2023).

Sub-Saharan Africa: This is the region of greatest concern. It now has the highest prevalence (risk) in the world, with about 31% of young women married as children. While other regions are improving, the number of child brides in Africa is actually projected to grow because the population is increasing so quickly (UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, 2024).

Latin America and the Caribbean: Progress here has been stagnant for 25 years. This lack of advancement is primarily due to the prevalence of informal unions, which bypass formal legal systems and are harder to regulate through standard legislative reforms (UNICEF, 2023). Child marriage rates have stayed at about 25% for decades, largely through informal unions among the poorest communities (UNICEF, 2023).

Middle East and North Africa: About one in six young women are married before 18. This region has seen some progress, especially in making that progress more "equitable" (fair) between rich and poor families (UNICEF, 2023).

Current Challenges

The Polycrisis (Conflict, Climate, and Health)

Multiple crises are happening at the same time. The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme (2024) report notes that:

Conflict: In countries like Yemen, nearly one-third of young women were married before 18. Conflict makes it hard for aid groups to reach girls and keep them in school.

Climate Change: In countries like Ethiopia and Pakistan, extreme droughts and floods have destroyed family farms. This economic shock pushes families to choose marriage as a way to reduce their financial burden.

COVID-19: The pandemic caused school closures that led to millions of girls never returning to the classroom, which increased their risk of marriage.

Global Pushback

A new challenge identified in 2024 is a "global pushback" against gender equality. In some countries, there are new efforts to lower the legal age of marriage or roll back protections for women. For example, in 2024, there were proposed law changes in Iraq that threatened to lower the marriage age for girls to as young as nine (UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, 2024).

Legislative Gaps

Even when countries have "good laws" on paper, there are often gaps. In many regions, the government has not "notified" (officially started) the rules needed to enforce the laws. For example, some provinces in Pakistan have passed laws but still lack the specialized courts or social workers needed to handle cases of child marriage (CGPA, 2017).

Key Points of Tension

International Human Rights and Regulatory Frameworks

Under international law and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3, child marriage is defined as a "harmful practice" and a violation of human rights. This institutional perspective, upheld by organizations such as UNICEF (2023), focuses on the long-term impact of the practice, including the interruption of education, limited earning potential, and the loss of individual agency for girls.

In practice, particularly within regions experiencing the "polycrisis" of conflict, climate-related disasters, and economic instability, child marriage is often utilized as a situational survival strategy. At the household level, families may perceive early marriage as a "protective measure" (UNICEF, 2023).

Punitive Laws vs. Girls' Safety

There is an ongoing policy discussion regarding the balance between law enforcement-led (punitive) measures and social-support (preventive) programming. While strict legal prosecution is intended to deter the practice, it can produce unintended consequences. For example, the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme (2024) notes that in certain contexts, such as Assam, India, intensified legal action may discourage families from engaging with official systems, potentially creating barriers for married or pregnant girls seeking essential healthcare.

Global Standards vs. Cultural "Pushback"

A conceptual divergence often exists between international human rights standards and certain local or religious frameworks. In some contexts, political and religious leaders may characterize global gender equality norms as inconsistent with traditional social structures or family values. For instance, in Pakistan, legislation designed to protect women's rights is sometimes reviewed by religious councils, where it may be identified as being in conflict with established religious interpretations (CGPA, 2017).

Economic Survival vs. Long-Term Development

The "polycrisis"—characterized by the convergence of climate instability and conflict—often results in significant loss of household income. Under such structural pressures, early marriage may be utilized as an economic coping mechanism to mitigate extreme poverty and reduce household vulnerability (UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, 2024).

The Data and Visibility Gap

A significant portion of child marriages occur as informal unions without legal registration, meaning they are frequently excluded from official government records. Additionally, as noted in the UNICEF (2023) report, there is a "time lag" in data; current statistics often reflect unions that occurred several years prior. This delay can limit the ability of governments to monitor the immediate impact of emerging crises and implement timely interventions.

Summary of the Difficulty

Future progress faces significant hurdles as global efforts transition toward addressing the most entrenched cases. While substantial gains were initially made among wealthier populations, current challenges are increasingly concentrated among the poorest 20% of households and within conflict-affected zones. Sustaining momentum now requires navigating complex socio-political environments and addressing deep-seated structural inequalities (UNICEF, 2023; UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, 2024).

Link to the Committee

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global body dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The Role of the CSW in Addressing Child Marriage

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) serves as the principal global forum for evaluating progress and setting standards for gender equality. In the context of ending child marriage, the committee provides a unique space for delegates to deliberate on the following areas:

Operationalizing National Legislation

While many regions have established legal minimum ages for marriage, a significant gap often remains between statutory law and local implementation. Delegates may wish to consider how the CSW can facilitate the transition from legislative passage to practical enforcement. This includes debating strategies for resource allocation, the notification of administrative rules, and the development of specialized support systems to bridge the "policy-to-practice" gap identified in recent research (CGPA, 2017).

Prioritizing the "Furthest Behind"

Current data highlights that global progress has not been uniform across all socioeconomic groups (UNICEF, 2023). The committee offers a platform to discuss targeted strategies for reaching the most vulnerable populations, specifically those in the poorest wealth quintiles. Deliberations may focus on the effectiveness of various social protection models—such as

conditional support systems—and how they can be tailored to ensure that girls in high-risk households remain within the education system.

Navigating Normative Frameworks and Local Contexts

The CSW acts as a vital site for consensus-building regarding universal human rights and their application within diverse cultural settings. Delegates have the opportunity to negotiate how international standards can be upheld while engaging constructively with local traditions. Discussion may revolve around "gender-transformative" approaches and how to foster community-led shifts in social norms that align with the protection of girls' rights.

Integrating Child Protection into Emergency Responses

Given the impact of the "polycrisis"—the intersection of conflict, climate change, and economic shocks—delegates may examine how to integrate child protection more effectively into humanitarian frameworks. The committee provides the space to deliberate on guidelines that ensure child marriage prevention is recognized as a priority in crisis response, exploring ways to support families so that early marriage is not utilized as a last-resort survival mechanism (UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme, 2024).

Closing the Data and Accountability Gap

A significant challenge for policy-makers is the "visibility gap" caused by informal unions and data time-lags. Delegates may explore ways to improve real-time monitoring and reporting mechanisms. This includes discussing how to better capture informal unions in national statistics and how to develop more responsive data systems that can alert governments to the immediate impacts of emerging crises.

Bloc Analysis

Bloc 1: The Accelerated Rights & Gender-Transformative (GTA)

This group characterizes child marriage as a fundamental violation of human rights and a "global development emergency." Their primary objective is the total elimination of the practice by 2030 through strict legal enforcement and the dismantling of traditional social norms. They advocate for a minimum marriage age of 18 with no legal exceptions, the criminalization of facilitators, and "Gender-Transformative Approaches" (GTA) in education. They emphasize that legal reform must be paired with high-level political advocacy and comprehensive sexuality education to ensure girls' autonomy.

Bloc 2: The Contextualist & Survival-Protectionist Bloc

This group focuses on the underlying drivers of child marriage, such as the "polycrisis" of conflict, climate shocks, and extreme poverty. They often view the practice as a situational survival strategy or a "protective measure" used by families to mitigate economic instability and physical insecurity. These nations prioritize national sovereignty and community-led change over punitive laws, which they fear may drive the practice underground. They advocate for integrating child protection into humanitarian aid, utilizing vocational training, and engaging in dialogue with religious and traditional leaders to foster social change from within.

BACKGROUND GUIDE

CSW

TOPIC B:

SEXUAL VIOLENCE TOWARDS WOMEN IN ARMED CONFLICTS

Sexual Violence Against Women in Armed Conflicts

Background

Defining the Issue

Sexual violence against women in armed conflicts is a global human rights and security concern that persists across diverse conflict settings. While sexual violence can occur in any society and in any historical period, armed conflict amplifies both the risk and the impact of such violence. Conflict creates coercive environments characterized by insecurity, militarization, displacement, weak institutions, and limited access to justice. These conditions enable perpetrators to act with reduced fear of consequences. In many conflicts, sexual violence becomes more than a tragic side effect: it can be used deliberately to intimidate populations, punish perceived opponents, extract confessions in detention, and fracture community cohesion (OSCE, n.d.; ICRC, 2016).

At its core, the topic concerns acts of a sexual nature imposed through coercion, force, or abuse of power in the context of armed conflict. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) describes sexual violence as acts of a sexual nature imposed by force or coercion—including coercion arising from fear, duress, detention, psychological oppression, or abuse of power. Importantly, coercion can also occur when perpetrators exploit a coercive environment or a victim's inability to give genuine consent (ICRC, 2016).

The OSCE definition broadens the lens by emphasizing that sexual violence includes "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, human trafficking, or acts otherwise directed against a person's sexuality, using coercion… in any setting." This emphasizes that sexual violence is not only about physical assault; it also includes acts and behaviors that target sexuality through coercion, intimidation, or exploitation (OSCE, n.d.).

In armed conflict, the harms of sexual violence often extend beyond the individual survivor. Sexual violence can destabilize households and communities by breaking trust, intensifying stigma, triggering displacement, and contributing to cycles of violence and retaliation. Survivors may face immediate physical injuries and long-term psychological impacts, while communities may experience broader fractures in social cohesion and a deterioration of safety norms (ICRC, 2016).

Impact on Individuals **and** Communities

Sexual violence has immediate and long-term consequences for survivors. These include physical injuries, exposure to disease, psychological trauma, and social exclusion. Survivors may also face stigma, which can prevent them from accessing medical care, legal support, or reintegration into their communities. Beyond the individual level, sexual violence can disrupt families and communities by breaking trust, increasing displacement, and contributing to cycles of violence (ICRC, 2016).

Impact on International Peace and Security

Sexual violence in armed conflict is recognized as a threat to international peace and security. It can prolong conflict, deepen instability, and hinder post-conflict recovery. As a result, it is addressed not only as a humanitarian issue but also within the broader framework of international security (UN, 2025).

Impact on Gender Equality

The issue reflects and reinforces existing gender inequalities. Women and girls are disproportionately affected due to structural discrimination, power imbalances, and social norms. Addressing sexual violence in conflict is therefore closely linked to broader efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment (CSW, n.d.).

Historical Background

How the issue emerged into international focus

Sexual violence in armed conflict is not a new phenomenon; however, its global recognition as a core international policy issue is relatively recent. Historically, sexual violence was often minimized, hidden, or treated as inevitable during war. Survivors faced stigma and fear of retaliation, and institutions often lacked mechanisms or willingness to document these crimes. As a result, sexual violence could remain "invisible," even when widespread. The ICRC notes that feelings of guilt and shame, fear of retaliation, and taboos may prevent victims from coming forward, concealing the full scale of the problem and making it difficult to reach survivors with support (ICRC, 2016).

The first political science/international relations article specifically addressing "sexual violence" and "war" appeared in 2001. This highlights that for many years, mainstream international relations scholarship did not prioritize conflict-related sexual violence as a central topic, even though it was occurring (Nordås & Cohen, 2021).

Key historical developments that shaped the problem

1) 1990s conflicts and the transformation of international recognition

The wars in the former Yugoslavia (1992–1995) and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda are considered to be the major turning points of CRSV recognition. These conflicts were marked by widespread and horrific episodes of mass rape that became difficult for the international community to ignore. Importantly, these events did not just "increase" attention; they helped reshape how sexual violence in war was understood. Sexual violence began to be framed not as a private harm or incidental misconduct but as a conflict strategy that could be systematic (Nordås & Cohen, 2021).

SGBV is a serious human rights violation that is "endemic even in peacetime" but becomes more likely during armed conflict due to the breakdown of law and order, making it easier for

perpetrators to commit violence on a large scale with relative impunity. It is often used as a "strategy" or "tactic" of war to intimidate civilians or extract confessions from detainees (OSCE, n.d.).

2) Recognition of variation and complexity (mid-2000s onward)

Another key historical development in the scholarship is the recognition that wartime sexual violence is not uniform across conflicts. The second phase of research growth spurred by the recognition that sexual violence exhibits significant variation across conflict settings and actors, forms of violence, identities of targeted groups (including male victims), and locations. This matters historically because it challenged simplified narratives that sexual violence is inevitable in all wars to the same degree. Instead, it opened space for policy debates about what conditions intensify risk, how armed groups differ, and how prevention might be possible (Nordås & Cohen, 2021).

Important moments that escalated, transformed, or reframed the issue

2008 (Security Council recognition)
The UN notes that in 2008 a "pivotal shift" occurred when the Security Council formally declared sexual violence a deliberate tactic of war and a direct threat to international peace and security, affirming that such violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide. This shift is significant because it moved the issue into the highest levels of international security governance and reinforced the expectation of accountability (UN, 2025).

2019 (survivor-centered approach)
From 2019 toward the UN adopts a comprehensive and survivor-centered approach, refocusing prevention and response on the rights, needs, safety, dignity, and well-being of survivors, and emphasizing the need to address root causes such as structural gender inequality. This reframing matters because it pushes beyond a purely punitive or rhetorical approach and demands policies that address long-term recovery and systemic inequality (UN, 2025).

The UN Secretary-General's report for 2024 highlights that even 25 years after Security Council resolution 1325, conflict-related sexual violence continues to primarily affect women and girls. This shows that international recognition and norms have advanced, yet implementation and prevention remain deeply challenged (UN, 2024).

International Framework

Relevant treaties, conventions, resolutions, and norms

A) International Human Rights Law (IHRL)

International human rights law applies to states and is often described as governing obligations in peacetime; however, it is especially relevant when addressing sexual violence, especially as a form of discrimination and violence against women. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) is central in this framework, requiring

states to take steps to prevent and eliminate violence against women as a form and manifestation of gender-based discrimination (OSCE, n.d.).

Other important global commitments aimed at eliminating violence against women include the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and Istanbul Convention (2011) (OSCE, n.d.).

SGBV can constitute torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, prohibited by the UN Convention Against Torture (1984) and other major human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This matters because it reinforces that sexual violence in conflict is not merely misconduct, but a violation of fundamental and non-derogable human rights protections (OSCE, n.d.)

B) International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

IHL applies during armed conflict and sets rules for protecting people not participating in hostilities. The OSCE outlines how the Geneva Conventions protect combatants not in active combat, prisoners of war, and civilians, and emphasizes that women must be especially protected against rape, enforced prostitution, or indecent assault. It also highlights that Additional Protocol II expressly prohibits rape, enforced prostitution, and any form of indecent assault (OSCE, n.d.). Sexual violence acts are imposed by force or coercion in conflict, and coercion may arise from detention, fear of violence, duress, or abuse of power. (ICRC, 2016).

C) International Criminal Law

International criminal law addresses individual liability. SGBV can amount to international crimes such as crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide depending on circumstances. The Rome Statute of the ICC explicitly lists forms of sexual violence (including rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, and other comparable acts) as crimes against humanity. It can also constitute war crimes in both international and non-international armed conflicts. While the Rome Statute does not explicitly link SGBV to genocide, the ICC has confirmed that rape and other SGBV may, depending on evidence, be an integral part of destruction of a group and can be charged as genocide (OSCE, n.d.).

Past attempts to solve the issue and relevant UN mechanisms

1) Security Council resolutions and the annual reporting system

The UN SG report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2467 (2019), which requests annual reporting on implementation of earlier resolutions, including 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), and 2106 (2013) (UN, 2024).

2) Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC) and the Team of Experts (TOE)

The OSRSG-SVC is a UN Secretariat office that supports the SRSG-SVC as the UN's spokesperson and political advocate on CRSV. The SRSG chairs UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict and is supported by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law/Sexual

Violence in Conflict (TOE). The TOE works with governments and UN missions to support investigations, prosecutions, adjudication in civilian and military systems, legislative reform, and protection of victims and witnesses. The office was established by Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), reflecting recognition that CRSV undermines peace, security, and rebuilding. (OSRSG-SVC, n.d.)

Current State of the Issue

The UN Secretary-General's 2024 report portrays a worsening global environment. It links proliferating and escalating conflicts with widespread conflict-related sexual violence amid record displacement and increased militarization. It emphasizes that, 25 years after Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), CRSV continues to primarily affect women and girls. It also references that in the Pact for the Future, Member States committed to concrete steps to eliminate and prevent violations experienced by women and girls in armed conflict, including CRSV (UN, 2024).

The report identifies multiple conflict-affected settings where the UN verified incidents and patterns, including Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel and the State of Palestine, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan (UN, 2024).

Major trends, patterns, and challenges

1) CRSV as a tactic of war, terror, torture, and repression

Sexual violence continued to be used as a tactic of war, torture, terrorism, and political repression (UN, 2024). SGBV is often used strategically to intimidate civilians or extract confessions from detainees (OSCE, n.d.). The may also be used as reprisal, to create fear, as torture, or systematically as a method of warfare aimed at destroying social fabric. These combined descriptions show that CRSV is not only opportunistic; it is often instrumental (ICRC, 2016).

2) Underreporting and difficulty of measurement

Data collection on sexual violence involves significant methodological and ethical challenges. Survivors may avoid reporting due to shame, fear of reprisal, and social desirability bias; they may conceal experiences strategically in difficult social environments. Underreporting is a widely recognized issue. It also notes gendered biases in reporting, including historical overlooking of

male survivors, with stigma intensified for men and boys. Invisibility due to taboo, shame, and fear, concealing the full scale (Nordås & Cohen, 2021).

In a CSW context, this matters because it means statistics and "verified cases" should be interpreted as minimums rather than full prevalence.

3) Acute medical urgency and barriers to care

Sexual violence is a medical emergency and that timely access to quality medical care within 72 hours is crucial to reduce risk of sexually transmitted infections and HIV and to access emergency contraception according to domestic law. However, in armed conflict, access to health care is often severely constrained by insecurity, distance, lack of facilities, or damage and destruction of medical infrastructure. This gap in survivor support is worsened by lack of access to medical care within the critical 72-hour window, shortages of trained professionals, stigma, insecurity, and geographic isolation, with services often donor-dependent and fragmented (ICRC, 2016; UN, 2024).

4) Displacement and heightened vulnerability

Certain populations may be more vulnerable to sexual violence, including internally displaced persons, migrants, widows, female heads of households, detainees, those associated with armed forces/groups, and those belonging to specific ethnic groups. Additionally, displacement leads to risk increase and services become harder to access. Conflict-driven displacement does not just reflect insecurity—it also creates new patterns of risk and dependence that can be exploited (ICRC, 2016; UN, 2024).

5) Impunity and weak accountability

Impunity remains the norm while persistent perpetrators, with over 70% of listed parties, appear in the annex for five years or more without preventive measures. Peace operation withdrawals (notably Mali and Sudan) have created security vacuums and reduced monitoring and survivor assistance mechanisms, which further weakened accountability (UN, 2024). Lack of national capacity and expertise to investigate and prosecute perpetrators contributes to widespread impunity in conflict and post-conflict settings (OSRSG-SVC, n.d.).

Regional differences and contextual variation

Wartime sexual violence varies significantly across conflicts and actors, forms of violence, targeted groups (including men and boys), and locations. It does not hold a unified form. Instead, a realistic framing is that CRSV can occur through different mechanisms depending on whether conflict involves detention systems, displacement, territorial control strategies, or campaigns to terrorize civilians (Nordås & Cohen, 2021).

There are however differences between typical patterns affecting women and men: women more frequently face repeated rape and sexual slavery; men more frequently face genital violence and sexual abuse in detention settings. This suggests that regional variation may partly reflect the

prevalence of detention abuses, patterns of armed group governance, and social stigma affecting reporting (OSCE, n.d.).

Key Points of Tension

1) Access vs. security: reaching survivors in conflict zones

Obtaining access to comprehensive health care—including psychosocial support—can be extremely challenging in armed conflict. Survivors may be unable to reach care due to insecurity, fear, or lack of facilities; medical infrastructure may be damaged or destroyed; and survivors may have to travel long distances through insecure environments, possibly only to discover services are no longer functioning. Humanitarian actors also face challenges in reaching victims due to the complex nature of armed conflict (ICRC, 2016).

This creates a policy tension: international actors can set standards, but those standards may remain unreachable if conflict dynamics prevent basic access.

2) Emergency response vs. long-term recovery

Immediate medical care within 72 hours is critical. At the same time, it notes long-term trauma and stigmatization and the need for sustained psychosocial and community support. This produces a structural trade-off: humanitarian funding often prioritizes short-term emergency intervention, while survivors need multi-year support for physical rehabilitation, mental health, legal processes, and economic reintegration (ICRC, 2016).

3) Reporting, stigma, and the politics of visibility

Sexual violence frequently remains invisible due to shame, guilt, fear of retaliation, and taboo (ICRC, 2016). Survivors may choose to conceal experiences strategically. These realities generate tension between calls for "better reporting" and the ethical obligation to avoid retraumatization and protect confidentiality. Ethical risks and methodological challenges of data collection, including privacy concerns and retraumatization risks (Nordås & Cohen, 2021).

4) Accountability vs. weak institutions and impunity

Even when international law is clear, national systems may lack the capacity to investigate or prosecute, or political factors may block accountability. Weak rule-of-law capacity role in supporting investigations, prosecutions, legislative reform, and victim/witness protection (UN, 2024).

This creates a tension between:

- international calls for justice and deterrence, and
- the reality that legal systems in conflict settings may be dysfunctional.

5) Survivor-centered approach vs. structural gender inequality

In 2019, the UN pushed for a universal survivor-centered approach, placing the rights, safety, dignity, and wellbeing of survivors at the heart of responses, while also emphasizing the need to address root causes such as deep structural gender inequality (UN, 2025).

However, structural gender inequality cannot be solved quickly, especially during active conflict. Yet structural inequality shapes vulnerability, stigma, and barriers to justice and reintegration. Thus, even the best designed survivor services may be undermined if social and institutional discrimination persists. In CSW debate, this often becomes a question of how to integrate gender equality and anti-discrimination measures into humanitarian response, peacebuilding, and national recovery, while recognizing that conflict contexts limit capacity (UN, 2025).

Link to the Committee

The Commission on the Status of Women is the UN's principal intergovernmental body dedicated to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. While the CSW does not prosecute crimes or deploy military force, it plays a powerful role in norm-setting, policy guidance, and shaping the global agenda on women's rights. Within the UN system, this role matters because states negotiate language and commitments through CSW processes that influence national policies, UN programming, and the broader framing of women's rights issues.

Sexual violence against women in armed conflict falls squarely within CSW's mandate because it is one of the most extreme manifestations of gender inequality and discrimination. It reflects unequal power relations, gender stereotypes, and discrimination—concepts central to the definition of gender-based violence. If gender discrimination is a root cause of vulnerability and harm, then a body dedicated to gender equality has direct relevance in shaping prevention and response frameworks (UN Women, n.d.). In relation to sexual violence in armed conflict, the committee provides space for delegates to consider:

Addressing Barriers to Access in Conflict Settings

In many conflict-affected regions, access to services remains limited due to insecurity, damaged infrastructure, and displacement. Through its role in reviewing progress and highlighting gaps, the CSW can draw attention to challenges in service delivery and encourage greater coordination between humanitarian and development actors. Its outcomes may guide Member States in improving access to essential services in complex environments, particularly for displaced and vulnerable populations (ICRC, 2016).

Supporting Legal and Institutional Frameworks

While international legal standards on sexual violence are well established, their implementation varies across contexts. The CSW supports the strengthening of legal and institutional frameworks by promoting alignment with international norms and encouraging cooperation with existing UN mechanisms. The committee provides a platform to discuss how legal and

institutional frameworks function in practice, including challenges related to enforcement and accountability in conflict settings (OSRSG-SVC, n.d.; OSCE, n.d.).

Addressing Stigma and Reintegration Challenges

Survivors of sexual violence often face stigma and social exclusion, which can prevent reporting and limit access to support. The CSW can address these challenges by promoting approaches that focus on social inclusion, awareness, and the reduction of discrimination. Through its normative influence, it can encourage Member States to integrate reintegration and community-based support into broader gender equality strategies (ICRC, 2016; UN, 2024).

Considering Structural Drivers of Vulnerability

Sexual violence in armed conflict is closely linked to broader patterns of gender inequality, power imbalances, and instability. The CSW encourages dialogue to examine these structural factors and integrate them into global gender equality frameworks. Through its recommendations and reviews of international commitments, it can support approaches that address root causes and promote long-term resilience and equality (UN, 2025).

Bloc Analysis

Bloc 1: Countries prioritizing strong legal accountability and international frameworks

These states emphasize that conflict-related sexual violence should be addressed primarily through international law, accountability mechanisms, and strengthened legal frameworks. They tend to support the role of international courts and UN mechanisms, and often advocate for clearer definitions, monitoring systems, and reporting standards. In negotiations, these countries are more likely to support references to international criminal law and accountability mechanisms, promote stronger monitoring, reporting, and documentation frameworks and emphasize alignment with existing international legal standards.

Bloc 2: Countries emphasizing sovereignty and national implementation

These states generally recognize the seriousness of the issue but stress that responses should remain within national legal systems and reflect domestic contexts. They may be cautious about external intervention or mechanisms perceived as infringing on sovereignty. In debate, they often emphasize state-led approaches and national ownership, express caution toward international judicial involvement or external oversight and highlight the importance of respecting domestic legal and cultural frameworks.

Research and Preparation questions

Topic A: Preventing Child Marriage for Girls in Developing Regions

1. Has your country "notified" the specific rules and regulations required to enforce existing child marriage laws, or does a gap exist between the law on paper and action on the ground?
2. How has recent regional instability (conflict, drought, or floods) changed the rate of child marriage in your country's most vulnerable provinces?
3. Does your national strategy focus on the criminal prosecution of families (punitive), or does it prioritize conditional cash transfers and social safety nets (preventive)?
4. How does your government track and provide protection for girls in "informal unions" or "customary marriages" that are not officially registered with the state?
5. What specific programs does your country have to engage men and boys in "Gender-Transformative" dialogues to shift the social norms that drive early marriage?
6. How can the CSW reconcile universal human rights standards with national religious or customary laws that allow for judicial exceptions to the marriage age?
7. To what extent is the "bride price" or "dowry" system integrated into your country's rural economy, and what vocational alternatives are being provided to families?

Topic B: Sexual Violence towards Women in Armed Conflicts

1. Given that UN-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence have increased in recent reporting periods, what role does the CSW play in prevention of further increase in the upcoming years.
2. In light of persistent underreporting and the documented barriers survivors face in accessing medical and psychosocial care, what can the international community do to lower these barriers?
3. With UN data indicating that impunity remains widespread and that many perpetrators are repeatedly listed without meaningful preventive action, what position can your delegation take on accountability mechanisms?
4. Given that there has been an increasing withdrawal in peace operations in certain regions due to both underfunding and bad source allocation, what can be done so that resources are allocated more efficiently?
5. Considering that sexual violence in conflict is increasingly recognized as a consequence structural gender inequality, what role can your country support for the CSW in addressing long-term social norms, legal reforms, and gender discrimination in post-conflict recovery?
6. Given that displacement increases vulnerability to sexual violence, what can be done to protect the displaced women and girls and prevent such violence from happening?

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