

The Italian Republic

Positions for the General Assembly Plenary

I. Protecting the Human Rights of Children in Areas of Armed Conflict and Extreme Poverty

The Italian Republic believes that the rights of children both in areas of armed conflict and extreme poverty must be held sacrosanct. Despite global efforts, children continue to be victims of child soldiery, child prostitution and child labor, all too often in the theater of war. Italy has been an active participant in previous international efforts to ensure the rights of children. On 5 September 1991, Italy ratified the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Optional protocols to the convention were ratified May of 2002. The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, to which Italy is a party, as well as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment both address human rights and the rights of children, victims of the slave trade, exploitation and violence. Italy has also ratified, regionally, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Convention of Torture and Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays an essential role in political initiatives as well as developmental cooperation in Italy's policy for the protection of children. In particular, children affected by armed conflict have been an Italian priority as seen by the adoption of "Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict" and the establishment of a working group within the Security Council that deals with said violations. Annually presented to the General Assembly and together with the EU, Italy has taken up the initiative on the Rights of the Child, which contains recommendations addressing the ability of children to enjoy all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Italy recognizes that areas of armed conflict are often in extreme poverty and believes strongly in protecting the rights of children in these areas. The International Criminal Court (ICC), established by the Rome Statutes 1 July 2002, acts independently of UN bodies to try individuals accused of international crimes against humanity, such as the trials of the alleged leaders of the Patriotic Forces for the Liberation of Congo and the sentencing of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo 10 July 2012. Italy also recognizes and supports the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children presented in A/RES/64/142 as not only a reaffirmation of previous human rights resolutions, but also an enhancement of the same by focusing on good practices and policies which put protecting the rights of children into action. Despite the efforts of Italy and other states, violations to children's rights by state and non-state actors persist. However, Italy will not rest until the rights of children in areas of armed conflict and poverty are secured.

Italy proposes for adoption three strategies for the protection of children's fundamental rights, both in areas of extreme poverty and armed conflict: 1) Italy recommends increasing the level of coordination between Member States, UN peacekeeping forces, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict, and Humanitarian NGOs to see that the children in areas of conflict receive rehabilitation so as not to be held responsible for action that takes place during the time of a conflict. 2) Although a far reaching and bold goal, Italy believes the protection of children and the preservation of their inherent rights requires bold programs, and suggests the formation of a new court under the auspices of the ICC to work with appropriate governmental and non-governmental agencies to create a regional judicial and law enforcement entity, with the objective to bring non-state actors engaged in the use of child labor, slavery, prostitution, and trafficking to justice. Italy respectfully suggests said coalition's law enforcement division be modeled after the European Union's Europol, providing communication and helping to coordinate operations, yet lacking the power to arrest within national borders to maintain state sovereignty. The ICC would act as an advocate to protect children's rights, and would be focused on prosecuting and preventing crimes against children as a subset of crimes against humanity. 3) Italy encourages a two-fold plan to help children in extreme poverty. Initially, while never intending to override or minimize any nation's sovereignty, Italy advocates creating reasonable means for refugees from war-torn and poverty stricken areas to become a legal part of their host country they have fled to, thereby enriching the receiving nation economically and culturally. Next, partnering with NGOs and other nations to improve conditions in regions refugees are fleeing from may potentially impact children's lives as early as possible. Italy strongly feels that the adoption of these strategies will ensure the protection of children's human rights.

II. UN Peacekeeping: Adapting to New and Current Economic Challenges

Point 1 of Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations (UN) states its mission to be, "[t]o maintain international peace and security," and the Italian Republic stands firmly behind this mission and its purpose. With poverty, discrimination, and conflict still implacable enemies to any nation, the mission of the UN remains relevant today. Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to be invaluable in providing cooperation consistent with the nation's policies for training with UN peacekeeping forces. As a strong supporter of UN peacekeeping missions, Italy has provided the accommodations for the United Nations Logistics Base since the creation in 1994 of A/RES/49/233, which acts as the nerve center on which the whole of UN peace mission logistics depends. Italy has also been at the forefront of providing aid in any of the theaters of peacekeeping that the UN maintains around the globe, from the Middle East to Asia to Africa. However, while many Member States, including Italy, have made great strides to ensure the safety of the citizens of the world for this generation and the next, the need for Member States' to financially support UN peacekeeping initiatives has never been greater.

Italy recognizes the economic challenges facing member states. Italy has suffered through well-publicized budget issues in the past several years. The nation has managed to defend its financial position by increasing taxation, limiting spending cuts and increasing borrowing. Italy has committed to a rigorous budget and introduced a balanced-budget amendment in its constitution in response to pressure from the European Union. A 26-page report commissioned by Italian president Giorgio Napolitano recently listed needed reforms. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) included a large number of suggestions. In 2013, Italy's economy was stimulated by foreign tourism and the National Agency of Tourism (ENIT) recently conducted a survey that confirmed an increase of travel to Italy, the fifth most visited destination in the world. These increasing figures are expected to give Italy's economy some reprieve, since tourism has always been a driving resource for the country accounting for 10.3 percent of GDP and 11.7 percent of jobs in 2012.

Notwithstanding the Republic's financial struggles, Italy's commitment to the UN is evident in its unwavering participation and major contributions to UN peacekeeping missions. In addition to regional offices in Florence, Perugia, and Venice there are a number of UN headquarters located in Italy: Brindisi-logistical and humanitarian support, Rome-food and agricultural agencies, Trieste-scientific research, and Turin-training. Italy is a member of the Human Rights Council and has been elected seven times to the Economic and Social Council as well as six times to the Security Council where Italy has taken an active stance on peacekeeping. Italy is the 7th largest contributor to the peacekeeping budget of the UN and also supplies the most military and police personnel of the EU to UN peacekeeping operations. We train the police forces in many countries with the eventual goal of their participation in peacekeeping missions. In order to ensure logistical support to all of the UN's peacekeeping missions globally, Italy maintains a UN "Global Services Center" base in Brindisi. Operating in Vicenza since 2005, the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU) is an Italian-US established initiative. The Centre has trained over 3,000 police officers from 29 countries. Italy plays a significant role in the UNIFIL II mission in southern Lebanon with more than 1,100 Italian troops stationed and at the ready. In addition to the Middle East, Italy is involved in UN missions in Africa (UNAMID, UNMISS and MINURSO), Asia (UNAMA and UNAMOGYP) and Europe (UNFICYP and UNMIK).

Italy believes that in order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century the international community must prioritize peace and security. Italy's unwavering commitment and longstanding, voluminous contributions to UN peacekeeping efforts is and has always been a top priority. There is no doubt where Italy intends to place its efforts regarding global peacekeeping initiatives and the challenges that lie ahead. As a demonstration of this commitment, on February 3, 2014 Italy's Defense Ministry and the United States Department of Defense together signed a memorandum of understanding at the Pentagon to promote joint training and education for peacekeeping operations. This alliance, which identifies and develops policies, procedures, and joint training as well as education, became effective immediately. The intention of this new collaboration, in keeping with the UN's mission, is to promote peace and stability to areas of the world in need. Italy has also helped through Carabinieri deployments in peace support operations since the 1990's, when they became an intervention model in the Balkans. They were also deployed in Iraq, Albania and Kosovo, where it is still active and has become quite an asset supporting the coalition of armed forces.

Italy would like to pursue the following recommendations in this area: 1) Further regional and global collaborations in education and joint training for peacekeeping missions along the lines of the recent US-Italy action. 2) Reassessing current peacekeeping operations to ensure that they remain relevant and successful 3) Expanding the training of government forces to allow them to be self sufficient with regard to defense. 4) Recognizing that peacekeeping is a short-term solution for an ongoing and perpetual problem that in the long-term needs to be re-addressed for continued prosperity, economic solvency, and world peace.