



What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)?

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a human rights treaty created specifically to promote and protect children worldwide. The CRC sets forth basic standards which individual nations agree to pursue on behalf of children. These norms rest on the following four underlying themes: **Survival, Protection, Development, and Participation.**

The CRC recognizes the family “as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children...”. It affirms “that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love, and understanding.” In acknowledgment of the primacy of the parent-child relationship, the CRC calls on governments to respect the responsibilities, rights, and duties of parents to provide direction and guidance to their children.



Background

2009: 193 nations have ratified the CRC, with the U.S. and Somalia* remaining the only 2 UN members who have not done so. The President has not sent the CRC to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for required review.

2002: U.S. Senate ratified both of the CRC Optional Protocols.

2000: UN General Assembly adopted the CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography and the CRC Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

1995: On behalf of President Clinton and the United States, Madeleine Albright, acting as the U.S. Delegate to the UN, signed the CRC.

1990-1994: Resolutions are introduced in the U.S. Senate calling for ratification of the CRC.

1990: Following ratification by 20 countries, the CRC entered into international law.

1979-1989: Recognizing the need for a legal mechanism to ensure the universal protection of child welfare, governmental representatives and NGOs drafted the CRC. Provisions regarding a child’s right to freedom of thought, speech, association, religion and privacy were inserted by U.S. delegates at the request of President Reagan’s Administration.

1959: UN General Assembly endorsed the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Provisions added to the 1924 Declaration include the right to an identity, family, education, and freedom from discrimination.

1924: League of Nations adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Geneva Convention) which addressed a child’s right to the following regardless of race, nationality or creed: survival, nutrition, shelter, health care, humanitarian relief, protection from exploitation, and the right to grow up in an environment that fosters their development.



Position

The U.S. has some of the best laws in the world to protect our children, yet too many of them face considerable hardships, including insufficient health care coverage, inadequate educational opportunities, and high rates of poverty, abuse and neglect, hunger, infant mortality, incarceration, homicide, suicide, and firearm-related deaths. In the U.S., the CRC would establish a useful framework from which our elected officials could create cost-effective and comprehensive policies and programs that address the specific needs of children and families.

U.S. ratification would enhance our role as an international leader in human rights. With our country’s endorsement of the CRC, the world would stand united in its universally shared goal to protect and promote children’s best interests. As a party to the Convention, the U.S. would be eligible to participate in the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the international body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the CRC) and take an active role in encouraging further progress in countries that have already ratified the Convention.

* At present, Somalia is without a functioning central government. However, parties within the government structure have committed to signing and ratifying the CRC once the situation is rectified.