

**Committee: SOCHUM 1**

**Topic: The question of migrant juveniles travelling alone**

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## **Summary**

The question of migrant juveniles poses a concerning issue to the United Nations (UN), relating to the welfare and safety of children. It is estimated that over 300,000 children, under the age of 18 years of age, make the journey to a host country as a migrant. These journeys can entail a number of dangers and issues for these minors that may pose a risk to life. Primarily, the focus of the United Nations lies with ensuring the safety and welfare of these juveniles, while protecting their basic human rights along with ensuring the enforcement of the United Nation Convention on the rights of a child. This question causes some division, with the safety of children, fronted with policies of migration and laws regarding legal and illegal migration. Migrant juveniles also pose an issue when, as can be seen in many cases, the child does not have any parents or guardians in the host country, and therefore may be put into a country's foster care system. This therein leaves a balance to be found, between the protection of these children, while not overloading the migration system of a country.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

**Migrant** – A person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to find work or better living conditions.

**Juvenile** – A person who has not yet attained their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Unaccompanied Child** – Person who has no lawful immigration status, has not attained 18 years of age, there is no parent or legal guardian in the country being entered, no parent or legal guardian is available to provide care and physical custody in the receiving country.

**Labour exploitation** – Exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery and servitude where one agent takes advantage of another.

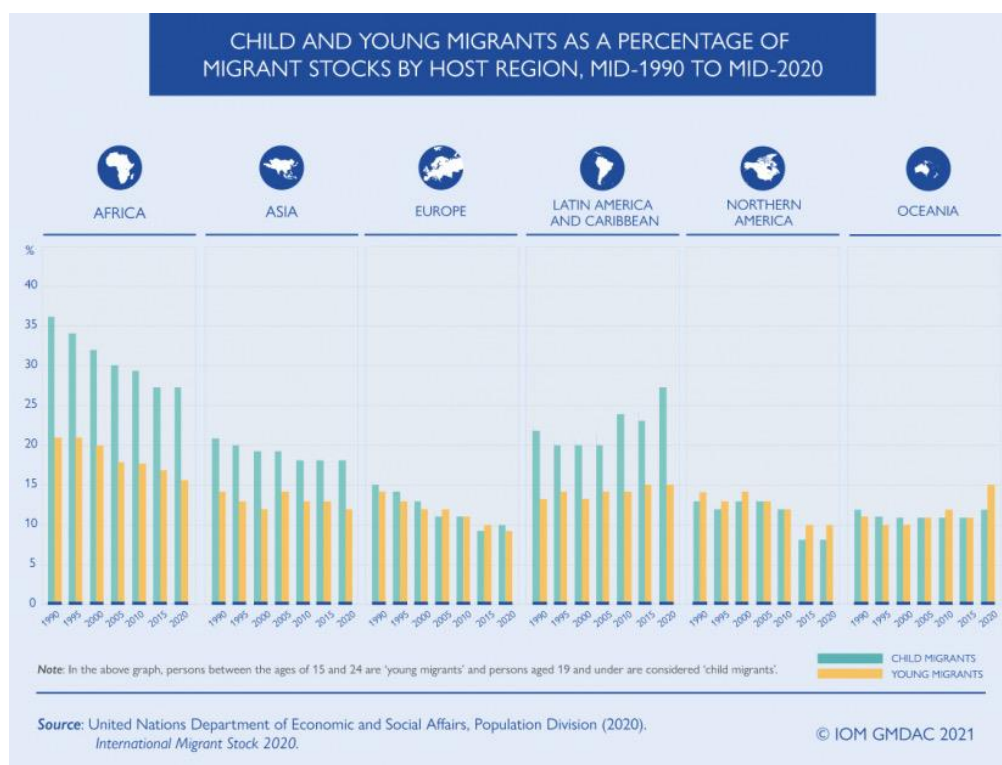
**Trafficking** - The recruitment, harbouring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

**Reunification** – Process of reconnecting children with their families.

**Migrant Detention** – practice of holding or incarcerating migrants while going through deportation proceedings in order to determine whether they will be deported or allowed to remain in the country.

## Background Information

Globally, the migration of unaccompanied minors is increasing. In 2022 it was reported that unaccompanied minors made up 19% of first-time asylum applicants under the age of 18 in the European Union. There has been a 500% increase in this number since 2010. An increasing number of children are taking these routes with the potential of smugglers, traffickers and drug operations. 300,000 minors travelling alone were recorded in 2017, from 80 countries. Children migrants are at a high risk of trafficking, with these children accounting for approximately 28% of trafficking victims globally. Most unaccompanied minors are above the age of 14, with the younger minority being assumed to be incapable of making decisions independently. In 2013, 76% of child migrants were between the ages of 15-17. In a time of high geopolitical tensions globally, more and more children are being displaced from their homes and are therefore forced to migrate to other countries alone. This can be seen as a result of conflicts such as the ones occurring in South Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine along with others. Many children will lose parents, family and guardians through these conflicts and as a result, will be forced to migrate unaccompanied. The graph below shows the number of children and migrants as a percentage of migrant stocks by host region. This can be seen to be increasing, especially in the regions of Latin America and the Caribbean.



## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

**Mexico** – US, Mexico boarder sees a large proportion of the unaccompanied minors with 100,000 unaccompanied children apprehended at the boarder in 2015-2016

**Italy** – unaccompanied children accounted for 92% of all children arriving to the country by in 2016 and 2017

**Benin** - Sub Sahara Africa and the Caribbean have the highest rates of child trafficking, with Benin having the highest rate globally

**Greece, Cyprus** – More than 72,000 regress are stranded in these nations with more than 22,500 children

**Turkiye** –Has taken in more than 3 million Syrians, the largest population of refugees in the world

**Ethiopia** – The area of Gambella hosts 337,000 refugees, 60% of these are children with more than 22,000 children who have been separated from or have lost their parents due to conflict in South Sudan

**UNICEF** – United Nations Children’s Fund, calling on governments to adopt its six point agenda for action to protect refugee and migrant children and ensure their wellbeing at the G7 summit in Italy

## Timeline of Events

| Date | Description |
|------|-------------|
|------|-------------|

(Just a brief description of the main events to provide context)

**2002** – The term ‘Unaccompanied Alien Children’ was first used in the Homeland Security act of 2002. The name is a classification for children in immigration custody

**2003** – Unaccompanied Alien Children Programme begins. Set up by the Office of Refugee Resettlement by the government of the United States

**2006** – UN Secretary General’s study on Violence against children is presented

**2014** – American Immigration Crisis. Surge in unaccompanied children and women from the northern triangle of Central America, seeking entrance to the United States

**2021** - Release of FRA’s report titled ‘Unaccompanied children outside the child protection system’ – Case Study: Pakistani children in Greece

**2023** – Dublin Reform: Effective Access to an Asylum Procedure within Europe is released by UNICEF

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

United Nations High Commission for Refugees

United Nations (UN) Convention on the rights of the child – This convention is a legally binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities

European Parliament – ‘Treaty Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child,’ January 2008 – Policy aiming to be a comprehensive framework towards the rights of a child. Outlines the

rights of all children including secure access to basic services and a special focus on vulnerable children.

'Resolution adopted by the human rights council – 36/5, Unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents and human rights' – September 2017

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

**Unaccompanied Alien Children Programme** – Set up by the Office of Refugee Resettlement by the US government. Between its inception in 2003 and 2011, only 8000 children were housed per year. In 2019, amid a surge in unaccompanied minors, 12,587 minors were housed, far over the departments capacity.

**UNICEF's Agenda for Action for Refugee and Migrant Children** – six point agenda that was released ahead of FRA, Better protection for unaccompanied migrant children.

## Possible Solutions

**Action on the causes** – many migrant children are displaced from these countries of origin due to extreme poverty and persistent violence. Creating policies that aim to reduce these factors will inevitably reduce the number of children having to travel alone.

**Safe Channels** – An increase in safer and more legal channels for children to migrate through will decrease risks and danger of these journeys. The strengthening of child protection systems can also reduce this.

**Keep Families Together** – many unaccompanied minors face travelling alone as a result of separation from family and difficulties in legal status in a country. Stronger policies to prevent separation of children and faster procedures to reunite children with families.

## Bibliography

(Title of source, author, date of publication – you may also wish to list some useful websites)

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