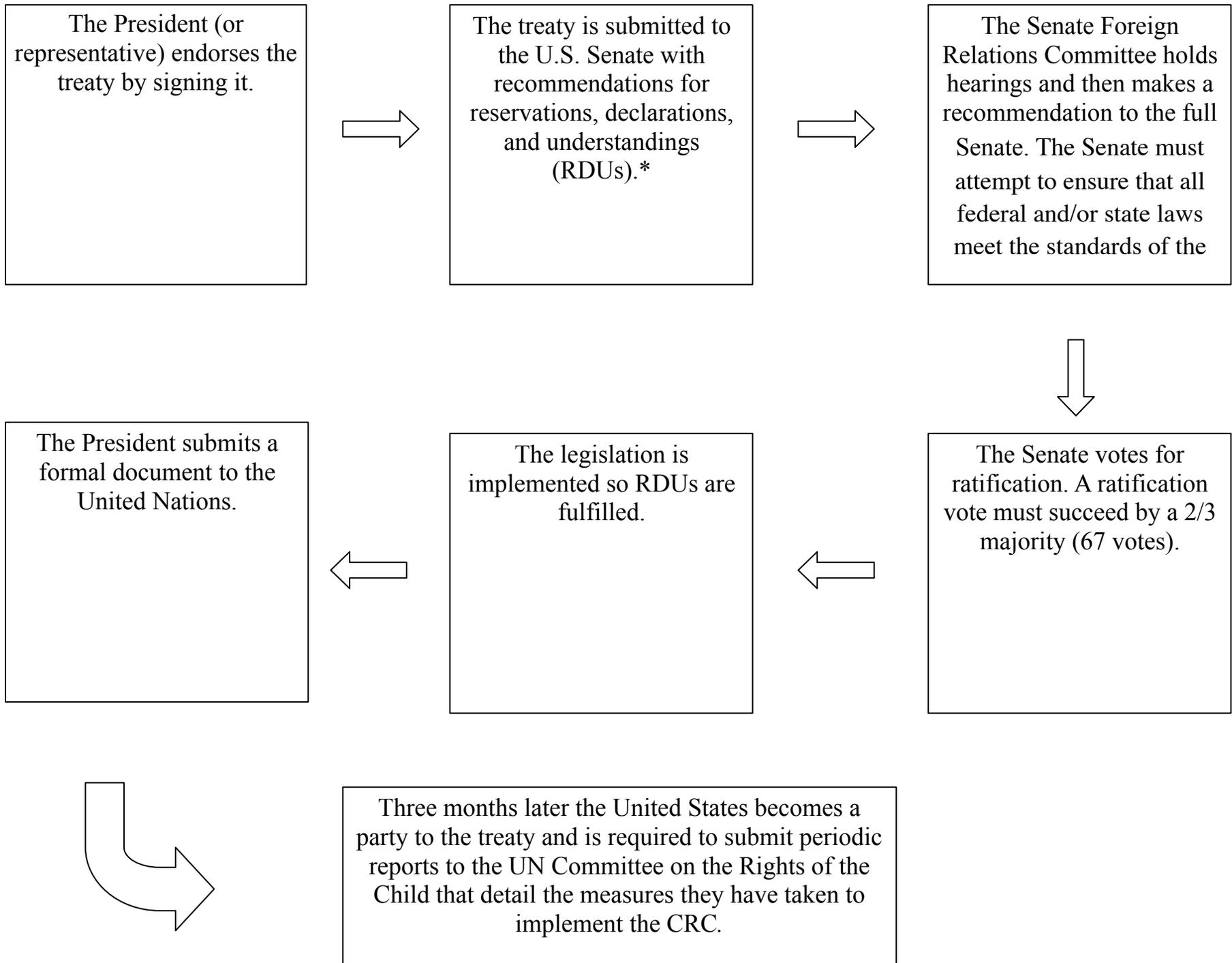


U.S. Ratification Process for International Treaties



***RDU**s are unilateral statements made upon signature, ratification, acceptance, approval of or accession to a treaty. Reservations are limitations on the commitment undertaken. Declarations and Understandings are made to convey a country's understanding of a matter contained in or the interpretation of a particular provision in a treaty. They do not purport to exclude or modify the legal effects of the treaty.

Examples: Here are some of the U.S. declarations and understandings for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict:

Declaration: The Government of the United States of America declares, pursuant to Article 3 (2) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict that -

- (A) the minimum age at which the United States permits voluntary recruitment into the Armed Forces of the United States is 17 years of age;
- (B) The United States has established safeguards to ensure that such recruitment is not forced or coerced, including a requirement in section 505 (a) of title 10, United States Code, that no person under 18 years of age may be originally enlisted in the Armed Forces of the United States without the written consent of the person's parent or guardian, if the parent or guardian is entitled to the person's custody and control;
- (C) each person recruited into the Armed Forces of the United States receives a comprehensive briefing and must sign an enlistment contract that, taken together, specify the duties involved in military service; and
- (D) all persons recruited into the Armed Forces of the United States must provide reliable proof of age before their entry into military service.

Understanding: The United States understands that, with respect to Article 1 of the Protocol -

- (A) the term "feasible measures" means those measures that are practical or practically possible, taking into account all the circumstances ruling at the time, including humanitarian and military considerations;
- (B) the phrase "direct part in hostilities"-
 - (i) means immediate and actual action on the battlefield likely to cause harm to the enemy because there is a direct causal relationship between the activity engaged in and the harm done to the enemy; and

(ii) does not mean indirect participation in hostilities, such as gathering and transmitting military information, transporting weapons, munitions, or other supplies, or forward deployment; and

(C) any decision by any military commander, military personnel, or other person responsible for planning, authorizing, or executing military action, including the assignment of military personnel, shall only be judged on the basis of all the relevant circumstances and on the basis of that person's assessment of the information reasonably available to the person at the time the person planned, authorized, or executed the action under review, and shall not be judged on the basis of information that comes to light after the action under review was taken.