

Glossary for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Convention: Binding agreement between states; used synonymously with Treaty and Covenant. Conventions are stronger than Declarations because they are legally binding for governments that have signed them. When the UN General Assembly adopts a convention, it creates international norms and standards. Once a convention is adopted by the UN General Assembly, Member States can then Ratify the convention, promising to uphold it. Governments that violate the standards set forth in a convention can then be censured by the UN.

Optional Protocol: A treaty that modifies another treaty. The term refers to only those protocols in various conventions in which states are not strictly obliged to ratify. The two Optional Protocols were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 May 2000. They are: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In order for the Optional Protocols to enter into force, States must ratify each of the Protocols following the same procedure required when ratifying the Convention. In the case of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, upon ratification States are also required to make a declaration regarding the age at which they will permit voluntary recruitment into national forces.

Signing, Sign: In human rights the first step in ratification of a treaty; to sign a Declaration, Convention, or one of the Covenants constitutes a promise to adhere to the principles in the document and to honor its spirit. For example: In 1995, Madeleine Albright, acting as the U.S. Delegate to the UN, signed the CRC on behalf of President Clinton and the United States. However, the Convention has not been forwarded to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for consideration due to procedural and political barriers. Procedurally, it is the general policy of the U.S. to thoroughly evaluate the constitutionality and potential impact of a treaty prior to giving its consent for ratification. Much like our own Constitution, which requires judicial interpretation, the CRC also requires interpretation, which necessitates this type of diligent analysis and examination.

Ratification, Ratify: Process by which the legislative body of a state confirms a government's action in signing a treaty; formal procedure by which a state becomes bound to a treaty after acceptance.

Standards: The standards in the Convention on the Rights of the Child were negotiated by governments, non-governmental organizations, human rights advocates, lawyers, health specialists, social workers, educators, child development experts and religious leaders from all over the world, over a 10-year period. The CRC constitutes a common reference against which progress in meeting human rights standards for children can be assessed and results compared. Having agreed to meet the standards in the Convention, governments are obliged to bring their legislation, policy and practice into accordance with the standards in the Convention; to transform the standards into reality for all children; and to abstain from any action that may preclude the enjoyment of those rights or violate them. Governments are required to report periodically to a committee of independent experts on their progress to achieve all the rights.

Sources:

http://www.cridoc.net/glossary_o.php

http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/hreduseries/hereandnow/Part-5/6_glossary.htm

http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30229.html

Abridged Glossary for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

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Protocol: A treaty which modifies another treaty (e.g., adding additional procedures or substantive provisions).

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