

Frequently Asked Questions: Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers

What are the Vancouver Principles?

The Vancouver Principles are a set of political commitments endorsed by Member States regarding the prevention of recruitment and use of child soldiers in a peacekeeping context.

Why are they called the Vancouver Principles?

The Vancouver Principles will be formally adopted on 14 November 2017 on the margins of the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver, Canada.

What is the purpose of the Vancouver Principles?

The purpose of the Vancouver Principles is to prioritize and further operationalize child protection within UN peacekeeping with a focus on preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Who are the Vancouver Principles aimed at?

The Vancouver Principles are geared toward troop and police contributors operating under a UN peacekeeping mandates. However, many of the themes underlying the principles can be applicable military and police operating outside a UN peacekeeping context.

Who can endorse the Vancouver Principles?

The Vancouver Principles are open to all UN Member States, regardless if they are currently troop or police contributing countries.

What do countries who endorse the Vancouver Principles agree to?

By endorsing the Vancouver Principles Member States commit to undertake several common-sense steps to prevent children from being used as soldiers. These include planning and training; addressing early warning signs and reporting abuses and Grave Violations; sharing best practices; acting effectively to prevent child recruitment; appointing child protection focal points; ensuring proper conduct of peacekeepers; and including child protection in peacekeeping mandates, peace agreements, and DDR efforts. Endorsing states are encouraged to implement the Vancouver Principles through their respective roles in authorizing peacekeeping mandates as members of the UN Security Council, approving aspects of peacekeeping budget that support the Principles' implementation, contributing to the development of peacekeeping policies through the General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping, contributing personnel directly to peacekeeping operations, and/or providing training and equipment to countries that contribute troops or police to peacekeeping operations.

How are the Vancouver Principles different from other child protection and peacekeeping commitments?

Building upon the existing child protection framework, the Vancouver Principles take a more pro-active stance on preventing child recruitment in the context of peacekeeping operations, specifically with regard to early warning and the active prevention of recruitment. Moreover, the Vancouver Principles put forth political commitments by Member States regarding training, planning, and the conduct of their own peacekeepers in regards to child soldiers in the context of UN operations.

How were the Vancouver Principles developed?

The Vancouver Principles were conceived by the Government of Canada in partnership with the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, and developed in consultation with the UN Department

of Peacekeeping Operations, UNICEF, the Special Representative to the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, child protection actors and civil society partners, and UN Member States.

What are the benefits of endorsing the Vancouver Principles?

By endorsing the Vancouver Principles Member States acknowledge the unique challenges posed by child soldiers and help ensure that their peacekeepers are prepared to prevent their recruitment and use in the context of peacekeeping operations. In so doing, they help ensure that children are kept off the battlefield and out of harm's way; enhance operational effectiveness of peacekeepers thereby increasing the likelihood that they will fulfill their mandates; and reduce the incidence of mental trauma among their peacekeepers.

How do Member States endorse to the Vancouver Principles?

Member States can endorse to the Vancouver Principles by sending a *note verbale* to the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations.

Can Member States endorse the Vancouver Principles after the Vancouver Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial?

Yes, Member States may join the Vancouver Principles any time after their adoption; however, they will not be listed as founding states if they join after 14 November 2017.

Can Member States join the Vancouver Principles if they do not participate in the Vancouver Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial?

Yes.

Are the Vancouver Principles legally binding?

No. They are a set of non-binding pledges aimed at preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers in context of UN peacekeeping.

How do the Vancouver Principles relate to the existing framework on peacekeeping, the protection of civilians, and child protection?

The Vancouver Principles are designed to build upon and complement the existing framework on peacekeeping and child protection, most notably the Paris Principles and relevant Security Council resolutions, among others. First, and above all, the Vancouver Principles specify actions that Member States will undertake regarding training, planning, and the conduct of their own national forces, be they police or military, in a peacekeeping context. The Vancouver Principles therefore cover critical gap in policies and military and police doctrine for preventing the recruitment of children and responding to child soldiers encountered in the course of peacekeeping.

Do the Vancouver Principles apply to humanitarian actors and child protection actors?

No. While the Vancouver Principles recognize and complement the valuable work carried out by various child protection actors, they are intended for police and military forces operating in a peacekeeping context.

What are examples of Member States implementing the Vancouver Principles?

There are many examples of Member States implementing elements of the Vancouver Principles. Canada has developed a joint doctrine note on child soldiers which includes guidance for the planning and execution of operations, including specialized pre-deployment training. Jordan's Public Security Directorate has included training on child soldiers to prepare

their police for peacekeeping operations. Sierra Leone has begun to integrate child soldiers into training for armed forces, police, and corrections with a view of further developing doctrine.

What are the next steps after the Vancouver Principles are adopted?

The Vancouver Principles establish a common political framework among Member States for preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers in a peacekeeping context. The Vancouver Principles envisage more detailed operational guidance for their implementation in training and operations. This guidance is to be developed in consultation with Member States, the UN and child protection actors.

Who can I contact for additional information?

Further queries can be directed to Mr. Simon Collard-Wexler, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations in New York (simon.collard-wexler@international.gc.ca).