



Ministero degli Affari Esteri
e della Cooperazione Internazionale

International Conference

The establishment of the YouthNet International Children Mediators for Long-lasting Peace and Security in the dimension of the IV National Action Plan "Women, Peace and Security"

A project of the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC) and the Institute of Political Studies "S. Pio V"

supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

within the Fourth Italian National Action Plan on UNSCR1325

4 December 2024 - Circolo degli Esteri (Rome)

The UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325/2000 assumes fundamental importance not only for protecting women from conflict-related violence but also in reaffirming the critical role of women in conflict prevention and resolution. This includes their participation in peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction. UNSCR 1325 emphasizes the necessity of their equal participation and full involvement in all aspects of maintaining and promoting peace and security. While UNSCR 1325 primarily focuses on the role of women, it also lays the groundwork for expanding its scope to include children - particularly girls- as key actors in peace and security processes, with a view toward fostering a more peaceful and sustainable future.

Italy's IV National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security moved in this direction, recognizing children, especially girls, as protagonists in the promotion of peace and security. Empowering children and young people to actively participate in peace processes is crucial, as their perspectives are vital for addressing the root causes of conflict and for creating lasting peace. Their involvement in societies affected by armed conflict is key to building pathways to stability. While young people often bear the brunt of violence, abuse, and displacement, they are also uniquely positioned to influence the future by supporting peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion. When provided with the right opportunities, young people can play a transformative role in healing divided communities, addressing the root causes of conflict, and preventing cycles of violence. Active involvement of youth in peace processes can help create inclusive, resilient societies that prioritize justice, reconstruction, and long-term sustainability. Supporting youth leadership in these contexts is an investment in the future.

The conference, organized by the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC) and the Institute of Political Studies "S. Pio V", and supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), will be an opportunity to present the results of the project's activities and officially launch the *YouthNet International Children Mediators*



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for Long-lasting Peace and Security. This network has been created to provide an always active space for ongoing dialogue and continuous exchange aimed at building and maintaining peace and security. It focuses on empowering children and young people from conflict, post-conflict, and non-conflict areas, strengthening their skills and capacities to act as agents of change. Through this Network, youth are supported in their efforts to contribute to a more sustainable and peaceful future, highlighting their vital role in inclusive and participatory global peacebuilding processes and amplifying their role as mediators in conflict and post-conflict settings.

The young people who are part of the YouthNet International come from different countries, some of them in conflict and post-conflict areas. Among these: Kosovo, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, South Africa, Slovenia, the United States and Brazil. They took part in the training activities promoted including the advanced course "Mediation & Children and Armed Conflict", which was held in a hybrid format at the University of Milan, and the legal clinics, which took place within the universities that collaborated on the project.

Objectives of the conference

This conference, set to take place in Rome on 4 December aims to share and disseminate the results of project activities carried out to contribute to strengthening the role of children and young people, in particular girls, through greater awareness of the value of training on mediation and the promotion of their effective involvement in peace processes.

During this event, it will be formally presented the *YouthNet International Children Mediators for Long-lasting Peace and Security* highlighting the transformative impact that young people can have in peacebuilding efforts.

The conference will bring together representatives from institutions, international organizations, and university professors involved in the project. These experts will contribute their experience in training, child protection in armed conflict, and mediation, reinforcing the importance of collaborative efforts. By pooling their expertise, they can collectively support the growing impact of young people in shaping more peaceful societies.

A group of students from different countries in conflict, post-conflict and non-conflict areas - representing all those who took part in the training activities promoted during the project, in particular during the advanced course "Mediation & Children and Armed Conflict" and the activities of the legal clinics - will participate in this event. These students are part of the *YouthNet International* and come from universities involved in the project. They will present the Manifesto developed during the training activities and share, through their testimony, the experience gained on the value of mediation process with a specific regards to the protection of children in armed conflict.

The participation of speakers from different fields of action certainly allows to continue with the commitment of encouraging collaborative efforts that lead to more effective policies, in-depth



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research and impactful programs focused on supporting the active participation of children and young people in peace-building processes worldwide and global security that are lasting.

Conference Agenda

10:00 am – 12:30 pm CET

Opening remarks

- **Mr. Luca Fratini**, Coordinator of Women, Peace and Security, Youth and Mediation, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- **Mr. Fausto Pocar**, Professor emeritus, University of Milan; President, Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC)
- **Mr. Paolo De Nardis**, Professor emeritus, University of Rome “La Sapienza”; President, Institute of Political Studies “S. Pio V”

Presentation of the project “The creation of the YouthNet International Children Mediators for Long-lasting Peace and Security”

- **Ms. Laura Guercio**, Secretary General, Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC); Professor at University "Niccolò Cusano" (Italy)
- **Ms. Vasilka Sancin**, Professor at University of Ljubljana (Slovenia); Member and Vice-Chair of the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee
- **Mr. Kito Masimago**, Professor and Dean at L'Université Moyen Lualaba (Democratic Republic of the Congo); Counsel, DRC Coordinator of the Coalition for the ICC
- **Ms. Jan Marie Fritz**, Professor at University of Cincinnati (USA) e University of Johannesburg (South Africa)
- **Mr. Aristide Canepa**, Professor at University of Genoa (Italy)
- **Ms. Bahtije Gerbeshi**, Professor at University of Pristina (Kosovo)
- **Mr. Ljubomir Petruškov**, MBA, Mediator and JAMS Fellow

Testimony of students and reading of the Manifesto for lasting Peace and Security developed by YouthNet International

Concluding remarks

- **Ms. Laura Guercio**, Secretary General, Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC); Professor at University "Niccolò Cusano" (Italy)

Moderator: **Ms. Giovanna Gnerre Landini**, UNETCHAC



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Special session

Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict Award 2024 to:

Mr. Alfredo Santoloci, Orchestra conductor and composer; founder of Blind Inclusive Orchestra

H.E. Ms. Blanka Jamnič, Ambassador, founder of the “Our Rights” project (Slovenia), and

Ms. Anica Mikuš Kos, pediatrician and child psychologist, president of the Slovene Philanthropy

Mr. Fabio Massimo Abenavoli, Doctor and president of Emergenza Sorrisi Onlus

UNETCHAC Scholarships 2024

Scholarship **in memory of Ambassador Francesca Tardioli** to Ms. Carly Sandstrom

Scholarship **in memory of Professor Maria Caterina Federici** to Ms. Giulia Marziale

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