



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
DI MILANO



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

**ADVANCED COURSE ON
MEDIATION & CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT
WITH AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CONTEST
2024 EDITION**

**Organised by the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict and the Department
of International Legal and Historic-Political Studies of the University of Milan**

with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

The "Advanced Course on Mediation & Children and Armed Conflict" is a key initiative of the broader project, "YouthNet International: Child Mediators for Long-lasting Peace and Security," supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) under the Italian Agenda on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS).

The main goal of the project is to establish a network of youth mediators, aged 15 to 25, called "YouthNet International: Child Mediators for Long-lasting Peace and Security". Participants will be selected through collaboration with universities within the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC) and various associated institutions, such as schools in the countries involved in the project.

The YouthNet International network will provide platform for constructive dialogue, knowledge sharing, and discussions on critical themes related to peace and security, while also nurturing the development of participants' role as mediators. The initiative aims to empower young people to amplify their voices on the international stage. Moreover, a key feature of this network will be the establishment of a specialized group focused on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC). This group will be responsible for developing and implementing strategies to address the specific needs and challenges faced by children, particularly girls, affected by armed conflict using a child-sensitive approach to mediation. By integrating this specialized focus, the network seeks to enhance its impact and ensure that the voices and needs of vulnerable children are adequately represented and addressed.

The main activities of the project are:

1. **Training the Trainers:** The first step involves organizing a two-week "Advanced Course on Mediation & Children and Armed Conflict" for university students. This training session will engage all university students simultaneously and cover different topics (see below).



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2. Legal Clinics on Mediation: Following the training, participants will aim to establish legal clinics within their universities with the support of their professors. These small working groups will serve as laboratories for the students to engage with real-world mediation scenarios, concentrating on the role of mediators in conflicts affecting boys and girls. Each legal clinic will function as a hub, called "YouthNet Mediators for Peace and Security," where participants will draft a memorandum emphasizing the role of youth in dialogue and peacebuilding.

3. Peer-to-Peer Training: The third step involves a one-week peer-to-peer training session where the trained university students will serve as trainers for high school students aged 15 to 18. Guided by professors and experts from the UNETCHAC, the university participants will share their memoranda with high school students to foster discussion and gather feedback. This step empowers young people not merely as trainees but as active agents of change and brokers of peace through mediation.

4. Formation of YouthNet International Children Mediators: A week (organized in a hybrid mode) will be dedicated to examining various memoranda created by the legal clinics. This analysis will serve as a basis for development of a YouthNet International Children Mediators Memorandum, establishing the foundational framework of YouthNet International Children Mediators. This document will outline the significance of peace and security for youth, particularly the role of young girls as mediators, and set criteria for the functioning of the first International Network of Youth and Children Mediators in collaboration with the UNETCHAC.

5. Launch Event: The final step will involve launching of the YouthNet through an international event that brings together all stakeholders to celebrate the initiative and foster further engagement (ideally Brussels or Geneva).

The Advanced Course

The Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC) is pleased to present a comprehensive course focused on mediation and children and armed conflict. This course aims to equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the unique challenges faced by conflict-affected children, particularly girls, through effective mediation strategies. It is designed for professionals, academics, and students who are passionate about protecting the rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict.

This course is considered a crucial element in the Network's broader initiative to create an international network of mediation experts and peace and security experts, particularly young people. This network aims to foster a global community of emerging leaders who are equipped to address complex issues in these fields.

In addition, a key feature of this network will be the establishment of a specialized group focused on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC). This group will be responsible for developing and implementing strategies to address the specific needs and challenges faced by children affected by armed conflict using a child-sensitive approach to mediation. By integrating this specialized focus, the network seeks to enhance its impact and ensure that the voices and needs of vulnerable children, particularly girls, are adequately represented and addressed.



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The course will play a pivotal role in this framework by providing essential training and knowledge on mediation, peace and security to young people, thus empowering them with the skills necessary to contribute effectively to the network's objectives. Through a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, participants will be prepared to engage in peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts with a particular emphasis on protecting children and mainstreaming the children and armed conflict agenda in relevant efforts.

Overall, this initiative represents a significant step toward building a robust and dedicated community of professionals, particularly young professionals, committed to advancing peace and security while prioritizing the protection and well-being of conflict-affected children.

The International Students' Contest in Mediation

Students attending in person will have the opportunity to prepare for the final contest under the guidance of course tutors during dedicated morning sessions from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Indeed, this course will feature an innovative exercise designed to prepare participants for a final contest in mediation and children in armed conflict that will be organised at the end of the course. Through this immersive experience, participants will engage deeply with fictitious scenarios, applying the mediation techniques and legal principles they have learned throughout the course. The contest in mediation will provide a unique platform for participants to put their knowledge and skills into practice, simulating the complexities of conflict resolution with a focus on protecting children's rights and integrating gender perspectives. This hands-on component aims to refine their competencies, preparing them for impactful roles as mediators in real-world conflict settings.

Course Objectives

Through this course, the trainees will be empowered with the knowledge and skills to advocate for and protect the rights of children affected by armed conflict. Trainees will be guided by experienced instructors, enriched by interaction with subject matter experts, and grounded in both theoretical and practical learning approaches.

1. Understanding the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children

- Explore the multifaceted impacts of armed conflict on children.
- Examine case studies and real-world scenarios to gain a deeper understanding of these impacts.
- Understand how these impacts differ across various regions and conflict situations and how they affect children differently based on gender, displacement and disability status, and other factors enhancing their vulnerability

2. Learning about Mediation Techniques

- Theoretical introduction to mediation. What is mediation? When is it necessary? Who are relevant actors? What are different tiers of mediation? What can a mediation process look like (process design)?



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- Gaining practical skills in mediation and conflict resolution tailored to the unique context of children in armed conflict.
- Learning about strategies to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation among conflicting parties, focusing on the needs and rights of children
- Participating in role-playing exercises to practice and refine their mediation skills.

2. Analyzing Legal and Policy Frameworks

- Examination of international legal framework and policies designed to protect conflict-affected children. A specific focus will be on the UNSC resolution 1325 and the Italian Agenda on WPS
- Understanding the roles and responsibilities of different international actors in safeguarding children's rights.
- Analysing the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks and identifying areas for improvement.

3. Developing Advocacy Strategies

- Creating effective advocacy plans to promote and protect the rights of conflict-affected children.
- Learning how to engage with various stakeholders, including policymakers like member states, international and regional organisations, NGOs, and the media, to advance your advocacy efforts.
- Developing skills in crafting compelling messages and campaigns to raise awareness and drive change.
- Engaging in effective and safe interaction with children and their communities

4. Engaging with Experts

- Interacting with leading experts in the fields of child protection, human rights, and conflict resolution.
- Gaining insights from their experiences and best practices in addressing the needs of children in armed conflict.
- Participating in discussions and networking opportunities to enhance your learning and professional growth.

Methodology

The methodology of this course on mediation and children in armed conflict is designed to blend theoretical exploration with practical, interactive learning experiences. This approach aims to equip participants with both a comprehensive understanding of key concepts and the practical skills necessary to address the complex challenges faced by children affected by armed conflict.



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Theoretical Foundations: Throughout the course, participants will engage in theoretical sessions led by expert facilitators. These sessions will delve into the psychological, social, and legal aspects of armed conflict's impact on children. Participants will gain insights into international legal framework and policies that safeguard children's rights in conflict zones, providing a solid foundation for understanding the complexities of child protection.

Interactive Workshops and Exercises: Practical learning is central to this course. Participants will actively engage in workshops, role-playing exercises, and case studies designed to simulate real-world-like scenarios. These activities will enable participants to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations, honing their mediation skills and understanding of conflict resolution techniques specific to children in armed conflict.

Group Collaboration and peer-to-peer Learning: Collaboration among participants from diverse professional backgrounds is encouraged throughout the course. Group activities and discussions foster peer learning, allowing participants to exchange perspectives, share best practices, and collectively brainstorm solutions to complex issues related to child protection and mediation.

Advocacy and Policy Development: The course also emphasizes advocacy strategies aimed at promoting children's rights in conflict areas. Participants will learn how to develop effective advocacy plans, leveraging their newfound knowledge and skills to influence policy changes and mobilize support for child protection initiatives.

Continuous Reflection and Feedback: Reflection and feedback are integral components of the learning process. Opportunities for reflection will be provided after each session and activity, allowing participants to consolidate their learning and identify areas for further development. Facilitators will also provide constructive feedback to support participants in refining their mediation and advocacy approaches.

By combining theoretical insights with hands-on learning experiences and practical application, this methodology equips participants to become effective advocates and mediators in safeguarding the rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict. Through this holistic approach, participants will enhance their professional competencies and contribute meaningfully to creating a safer and more just world for children in conflict settings.

Targeted audience

Leveraging the UNETCHAC's global composition, the course will target professionals, academics, and students from all over the world who are or will be future mediation and peace and security experts. Participants from countries in the CAAC agenda will be prioritized.

To ensure a more inclusive international reach, a few scholarships will be made available to support the participation of professionals and students from countries in the CAAC agenda.



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PROGRAM

Day 1, 4th November

Foundations of Mediation and Introduction to Armed Conflict

1.30-2.00 pm - Registration

2:00 – 2.30 pm – Welcome Addresses

- *Mr Marco Pedrazzi*, Professor of International Law and Director of the Department of International Legal and Historical-Political Studies of the University of Milan
- *Ms Virginia Gamba*, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
- *Mr Pasquale Ferrara*, Director-General for Political Affairs and International Security, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- *Mr Fausto Pocar*, President of the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict
- *Mr Luca Fratini*, Coordinator for Women Peace and Security, Youth and Mediation, Policies, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

2.30-3.00 pm- Introduction to Mediation in Conflict Zones

Mr Ljubomir Petruljeskov, MBA, Mediator, JAMS Fellow

- Understanding mediation fundamentals
- Types of mediation: preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution
- Discussion of mediation in the context of armed conflict

3:00 - 4:30 pm - The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children and the UN system

Mr Ahmed Nour, Program Management Officer, UN Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict

- Rights of children in armed conflict
- Violations experienced by children: recruitment, exploitation, displacement, disruption of education
- UN Security Council Resolutions on children and armed conflict
- The role of the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict



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Break (4:30 - 5:00 pm)

5:00 - 7:30 pm - Introduction to the International Student's Contest Case

Mr Ljubomir Petruljeskov, MBA, Mediator, JAMS Fellow

Ms Laura Guercio, Secretary-General of the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict

- Presentation of the case focusing on children in armed conflict and gender issues
- Roles and responsibilities of participants in preparation for the contest

Day 2, 5th November

Children's Rights and Protection in Armed Conflict

11:00 am - 1:00 pm – Students Contest Preparation

Teams start preparing their presentation under the guidance from the trainer

2:00 - 3:30 pm - International Legal Framework Protecting Children in Armed Conflict

Mr Fausto Pocar, Emeritus Professor, University of Milan; Former Judge at the ICTY, ICTR, ad hoc ICJ

- Geneva Conventions and Protocols specific to child protection
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

3:30 - 4:30 pm - Stakeholders in Protecting Children's Rights

Ms Vasilka Sancin, Professor of International Law, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Law; Member and Vice-Chair, UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

- Role of UN agencies, NGOs, and governments
- Coordinating multi-stakeholder responses in conflict

Break (4:30 - 5:00 pm)

5:00 – 6:00 pm - Mediation and Conversation Techniques for Helping Children in Armed Conflict Situations

Ms Yvonne M. Vissing, PhD, Director Center for Childhood and Youth Studies, Salem State University



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- Mediation as a communication strategy
- The psycho-social impact of mediation
- The Mediation Process
- 4 types of communication strategies
- How mediation is different for children than adults
- Importance of a Children in Armed Conflict Mediation Strategy

6:00 – 7:30 pm - Practical Workshop: Case Analysis and Mediation Practice

Mr Ljubomir Petruljeskov, MBA, Mediator, JAMS Fellow

- Analysis of real-life cases of child recruitment and exploitation
- Mediation simulation: forming teams to develop strategies for child protection Interventions
- Participants act as mediators in a simulated conflict involving child-related issues
- Practice identifying challenges faced by children in conflict and mediating solutions

Day 3, 6th November

Gender Perspectives in Armed Conflict and Introduction to Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda

11:00 am - 1:00 pm – Student Contest Preparation

Teams continue preparing their presentation under the guidance from the trainer

2:00 - 3:30 pm - Introduction to Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda

Mrs Jan Marie Fritz, Professor at the University of Cincinnati and Johannesburg

- Overview of UNSCR 1325 and its relevance to conflict mediation
- Gender-sensitive approaches in mediation

3:30 - 4:30 pm - Italian National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS

Ms Laura Guercio, Professor at the University Cusano, Rome

- Goals of Italy's NAP on Women, Peace, and Security
- Integration of WPS goals in Italian foreign policy and humanitarian missions

Break (4:30 - 5:00 pm)



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5:00 – 6:00 pm - Family mediation and the role of child in the context of Mediation

Ms Mikiko Otani, Member, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

6:00 – 7:30 pm - Practical Workshop: Gender-Inclusive Mediation Simulation

Mr Ljubomir Petruljeskov, MBA, Mediator, JAMS Fellow

- Participants engage in a simulation addressing the needs of women and children in conflict
- Emphasis on creating inclusive solutions within mediation processes

Day 4, 7th November

Advanced Mediation Skills for Youth and Conflict Case Preparation

11:00 am - 1:00 pm – Student Contest Preparation

Teams continue preparing their presentation under the guidance from the trainer

2:00 - 3:30 pm -The impact of International Criminal Accountability and of Transitional Justice on Conflict Mediation

Ms Chiara Ragni, Professor of International Law, University of Milan

3:30 - 4:30 Skills for Youth-Led Mediation in Conflict Situations

Mr Andrea Bandini

- Communication, negotiation, and conflict de-escalation techniques
- Power dynamics and overcoming resistance in mediation

Break (4:30 - 5:00 pm)

5:00 – 6:00 pm – Clinical Legal Education and Moot Court methodologies

Ms Sanja Bozhovikj Stojkoska, Legal Education Reform Expert

6:00 – 7:30 - Practical Session: Case Analysis and Strategy Development



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Mr Ljubomir Petruljeskov, MBA, Mediator, JAMS Fellow

- Team breakout to start planning their approach to the moot court case
- Trainer guidance on constructing legal arguments and mediation strategies

Day 5, 8th November

Moot Court Competition on Mediation and Children in Armed Conflict.

11:00 am - 1:00 pm - Final Preparation for International Students' Contest

- Teams make last-minute adjustments to their arguments and presentation
- Opportunity to ask final questions and receive guidance from the trainer

2:00 - 4:30 pm – International Students' Contest

- Each team presents their case, addressing mediation, legal, and gender-related issues
- A jury (comprising trainers and guest experts) evaluates the presentations

Break (4:30 - 5:00 pm)

5:00 – 6:30 pm - Evaluation and Feedback

- Jury provides feedback to each team on their performance and offer insights into improvement

6:30 - 7:30 pm - Course Wrap-Up

- Review of key takeaways from the course

Day 6, 9th November

Final Conference and Release of Certificates.

9.30 am - 12.30 pm

Mediation as a tool for achieving lasting peace and security: the role of children and young people in mediation

Moderator: Ms Laura Guercio, Secretary-General, Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict



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Mr Fausto Pocar, President of the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict

Mr Stefano Del Col, Deputy Head of Cabinet of the Ministry of Defence

Mr Marco Pedrazzi, Professor of International Law and Director of the Department of International Legal and Historical-Political Studies of the University of Milan

Course Materials

- **Daily Materials:** Case studies, legal texts, conflict scenarios, and training booklets on mediation
- **Resources:** Italian NAP on WPS, UNSCR 1325, and case files for the moot court

“Il presente programma di formazione è stato realizzato con il contributo dell’Ufficio I della Direzione Generale per gli Affari Politici e di Sicurezza del Ministero degli Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, ai sensi dell’Avviso n. D.D. n. 2111/330 del 31.07.2024. Le opinioni contenute nel presente documento sono espressione degli autori e non rappresentano necessariamente le posizioni del Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale”.

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