

Reservations and declarations made by countries in Europe and Central-Asia on the Convention of the Rights of the Child

At the time of ratification, the following countries made reservations:

The Principality of **Andorra** deplores the fact that the [said Convention] does not prohibit the use of children in armed conflicts. It also disagrees with the provisions of article 38, paragraphs 2 and 3, concerning the participation and recruitment of children from the age of 15.

1. Article 13 and article 15 of the Convention will be applied provided that they will not affect legal restrictions in accordance with article 10 and article 11 of the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950.
2. Article 17 will be applied to the extent that it is compatible with the basic rights of others, in particular with the basic rights of freedom of information and freedom of press."

The Government of **Austria** made the following reservations:

1. Austria will not make any use of the possibility provided for in article 38, paragraph 2, to determine an age limit of 15 years for taking part in hostilities as this rule is incompatible with article 3, paragraph 1, which determines that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
2. Austria declares, in accordance with its constitutional law, to apply article 38, paragraph 3, provided that only male Austrian citizens are subject to compulsory military service."

Interpretative declarations:

The Government of **Belgium** made the following reservations:

1. With regard to article 2, paragraph 1, according to the interpretation of the Belgian Government non-discrimination on grounds of national origin does not necessarily imply the obligation for States automatically to guarantee foreigners the same rights as their nationals. This concept should be understood as designed to rule out all arbitrary conduct but not differences in treatment based on objective and reasonable considerations, in accordance with the principles prevailing in democratic societies.
2. Articles 13 and 15 shall be applied by the Belgian Government within the context of the provisions and limitations set forth or authorized by said Convention in articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950.
3. The Belgian Government declares that it interprets article 14, paragraph 1, as meaning that, in accordance with the relevant provisions of article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 19 December 1966 and article 9 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950, the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion implies also the freedom to choose his or her religion or belief.
4. With regard to article 40, paragraph 2 (b) (v), the Belgian Government considers that the expression "according to law" at the end of that provision means that:
 - (a) This provision shall not apply to minors who, under Belgian law, are declared guilty and are sentenced in a higher court following an appeal against their acquittal in a court of the first instance;
 - (b) This provision shall not apply to minors who, under Belgian law, are referred directly to a higher court such as the Court of Assize.

The Government of **Denmark** made the following reservations:

"Article 40, paragraph 2 (b) (v) shall not be binding on Denmark.

"It is a fundamental principle of the Danish Administration of Justice Act that everybody shall be entitled to have any penal measures imposed on him or her by a court of first instance reviewed by a higher court. There are, however, some provisions limiting this right in certain cases, for instance verdicts returned by a jury on the question of guilt, which have not been reversed by the legally trained judges of the court."

The Government of the **French Republic** declares that this Convention, particularly article 6, cannot be interpreted as constituting any obstacle to the implementation of the provisions of French legislation relating to the voluntary interruption of pregnancy. It also declares that, in the light of article 2 of the Constitution of the French Republic, article 30 is not applicable so far as the Republic is concerned. Finally, the Government of the Republic construes article 40, paragraph 2 (b) (v), as establishing a general principle to which limited exceptions may be made under law. This is particularly the case for certain non-appealable offences tried by the Police Court and for offences of a criminal nature. None the less, the decisions handed down by the final court of jurisdiction may be appealed before the Court of Cassation, which shall rule on the legality of the decision taken.

In accordance with the reservations made by it with respect to the parallel guarantees of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the **Federal Republic of Germany** declares in respect of article 40 (2) (b) (ii) and (v) of the Convention that these provisions shall be applied in such a way that, in the case of minor infringement of the penal law, there shall not in each and every case exist:

- a) a right to have "legal or other appropriate assistance" in the preparation and presentation of the defence, and/or
- b) an obligation to have a sentence not calling for imprisonment reviewed by a "higher competent authority or judicial body".

Nothing in the Convention may be interpreted as implying that unlawful entry by an alien into the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany or his unlawful stay there is permitted; nor may any provision be interpreted to mean that it restricts the right of the Federal Republic of Germany to pass laws and regulations concerning the entry of aliens and the conditions of their stay or to make a distinction between nationals and aliens.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany regrets the fact that under article 38 (2) of the Convention even fifteen-year-olds may take a part in hostilities as soldiers, because this age limit is incompatible with the consideration of a child's best interest (article 3 (1) of the Convention). It declares that it will not make any use of the possibility afforded by the Convention of fixing this age limit at fifteen years.

The Government of **Liechtenstein** made the following reservations:

"According to the legislation of the Principality of Liechtenstein children come of age with 20 years. However, the Liechtenstein law provides for the possibility to prolong or to shorten the duration of minority."

"The Principality of Liechtenstein reserves the right to apply the Liechtenstein legislation according to which Liechtenstein nationality is granted under certain conditions."

"The Principality of Liechtenstein reserves the right to apply the Liechtenstein legislation according to which family re-unification for certain categories of foreigners is not guaranteed."

On 10 December 2003, the Government of Liechtenstein informed the Secretary-General of the following:

"The Principality of Liechtenstein partially withdraws its reservation concerning article 10 of the Convention as contained in the annex of the instrument of accession of 18 December 1995, namely with regard to paragraph 2 of the article guaranteeing the right of the child to maintain personal relations and direct contacts with both parents."

The Government of **Luxembourg** believes that it is in the interest of families and children to maintain the provision of article 334-6 of the Civil Code, which reads as follows:

- Article 334-6. If at the time of conception, the father or mother was bound in marriage to another person, the natural child may be raised in the conjugal home only with the consent of the spouse of his parent.
2. The Government of Luxembourg declares that the present Convention does not require modification of the legal status of children born to parents between whom marriage is absolutely prohibited, such status being warranted by the interest of the child, as provided under article 3 of the Convention.
3. The Government of Luxembourg declares that article 6 of the present Convention presents no obstacle to implementation of the provisions of Luxembourg legislation concerning sex information, the prevention of back-street abortion and the regulation of pregnancy termination.
4. The Government of Luxembourg believes that article 7 of the Convention presents no obstacle to the legal process in respect of anonymous births, which is deemed to be in the interest of the child, as provided under article 3 of the Convention.
5. The Government of Luxembourg declares that article 15 of the present Convention does not impede the provisions of Luxembourg legislation concerning the capacity to exercise rights.

The Principality of **Monaco** declares that this Convention, especially article 7, shall not affect the rules laid down in Monegasque legislation regarding nationality.

The Principality of Monaco interprets article 40, paragraph 2 (b)(v) as stating a general principle which has a number of statutory exceptions. Such, for example, is the case with respect to certain criminal offences. In any event, in all matters the Judicial Review Court rules definitively on appeals against all decisions of last resort.

The Kingdom of the **Netherlands** accepts the provisions of article 26 of the Convention with the reservation that these provisions shall not imply an independent entitlement of children to social security, including social insurance.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands accepts the provisions of article 37 (c) of the Convention with the reservation that these provisions shall not prevent the application of adult penal law to children of sixteen years and older, provided that certain criteria laid down by law have been met.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands accepts the provisions of article 40 of the Convention with the reservation that cases involving minor offences may be tried without the presence of legal assistance and that with respect to such offences the position remains that no provision is made in all cases for a review of the facts or of any measures imposed as a consequence."

It is the understanding of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands that article 14 of the Convention is in accordance with the provisions of article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 19 December 1966 and that this article shall include the freedom of a child to have or adopt a religion or belief of his or her choice as soon as the child is capable of making such choice in view of his or her age or maturity.

With regard to article 22 of the Convention, the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands declares:

- a) that it understands the term "refugee" in paragraph 1 of this article as having the same meaning as in article 1 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951; and
- b) that it is of the opinion that the obligation imposed under the terms of this article does not prevent
 - the submission of a request for admission from being made subject to certain conditions, failure to meet such conditions resulting in inadmissibility;
 - the referral of a request for admission to a third State, in the event that such a State is considered to be primarily responsible for dealing with the request for asylum.

"Article 38

With regard to article 38 of the Convention, the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands declares that it is of the opinion that States would not be allowed to involve children directly or indirectly in hostilities and that the minimum age for the recruitment or incorporation of children in the armed forces should be above fifteen years.

In times of armed conflict, provisions shall prevail that are most conducive to guaranteeing the protection of children under international law, as referred to in article 41 of the Convention."

With respect to article 7 of the Convention, the Republic of **Poland** stipulates that the right of an adopted child to know its natural parents shall be subject to the limitations imposed by binding legal arrangements that enable adoptive parents to maintain the confidentiality of the child's origin;

- The law of the Republic of Poland shall determine the age from which call-up to military or similar service and participation in military operations are permissible. That age limit may not be lower than the age limit set out in article 38 of the Convention.
- The Republic of Poland considers that a child's rights as defined in the Convention, in particular the rights defined in articles 12 to 16, shall be exercised with respect for parental authority, in accordance with Polish customs and traditions regarding the place of the child within and outside the family;
- With respect to article 24, paragraph 2 (f), of the Convention, the Republic of Poland considers that family planning and education services for parents should be in keeping with the principles of morality.

The Republic of **Turkey** reserves the right to interpret and apply the provisions of articles 17, 29 and 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child according to the letter and the spirit of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and those of the Treaty of Lausanne of 24 July 1923.

Definitions of key terms used in the UN Treaty Collection:

Adoption

"Adoption" is the formal act by which the form and content of a proposed treaty text are established. As a general rule, the adoption of the text of a treaty takes place through the expression of the consent of the states participating in the treaty-making process. Treaties that are negotiated within an international organization will usually be adopted by a resolution of a representative organ of the organization whose membership more or less corresponds to the potential participation in the treaty in question. A treaty can also be adopted by an international conference which has specifically been convened for setting up the treaty, by a vote of two thirds of the states present and voting, unless, by the same majority, they have decided to apply a different rule. [Art.9, Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties 1969]

Acceptance and Approval

The instruments of "acceptance" or "approval" of a treaty have the same legal effect as ratification and consequently express the consent of a state to be bound by a treaty. In the practice of certain states acceptance and approval have been used instead of ratification when, at a national level, constitutional law does not require the treaty to be ratified by the head of state. [Arts.2 (1) (b) and 14 (2), Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969]

Accession

"Accession" is the act whereby a state accepts the offer or the opportunity to become a party to a treaty already negotiated and signed by other states. It has the same legal effect as ratification. Accession usually occurs after the treaty has entered into force. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his function as depositary, has also accepted accessions to some conventions before their entry into force. The conditions under which accession may occur and the procedure involved depend on the provisions of the treaty. A treaty might provide for the accession of all other states or for a limited and defined number of states. In the absence of such a provision, accession can only occur where the negotiating states were agreed or subsequently agree on it in the case of the state in question. [Arts.2 (1) (b) and 15, Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969]

Ratification

Ratification defines the international act whereby a state indicates its consent to be bound to a treaty if the parties intended to show their consent by such an act. In the case of bilateral treaties, ratification is usually accomplished by exchanging the requisite instruments, while in the case of multilateral treaties the usual procedure is for the depositary to collect the ratifications of all states, keeping all parties informed of the situation. The institution of ratification grants states the necessary time-frame to seek the required approval for the treaty on the domestic level and to enact the necessary legislation to give domestic effect to that treaty. [Arts.2 (1) (b), 14 (1) and 16, Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969]

Reservation

A reservation is a declaration made by a state by which it purports to exclude or alter the legal effect of certain provisions of the treaty in their application to that state. A reservation enables a state to accept a multilateral treaty as a whole by giving it the possibility not to apply certain provisions with which it does not want to comply. Reservations can be made when the treaty is signed, ratified, accepted, approved or acceded to. Reservations must not be incompatible with the object and the purpose of the treaty. Furthermore, a treaty might prohibit reservations or only allow for certain reservations to be made. [Arts.2 (1) (d) and 19-23, Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties 1969]

Signature Subject to Ratification, Acceptance or Approval

Where the signature is subject to ratification, acceptance or approval, the signature does not establish the consent to be bound. However, it is a means of authentication and expresses the willingness of the signatory State to continue the treaty-making process. The signature qualifies the signatory state to proceed to ratification, acceptance or approval. It also creates an obligation to refrain, in good faith, from acts that would defeat the object and the purpose of the treaty. [Arts.10 and 18, Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969]

Succession

Participation in treaties in force at the date of the succession of States: a newly independent State may, by a notification of succession, establish its status as a party to any multilateral treaty which at the date of the succession of States was in force in respect of the territory to which the succession of States relates. Participation in treaties not in force at the date of the succession of States: a newly independent State may, by a notification of succession, establish its status as a contracting State to a multilateral treaty which is not in force if at the date of the succession of States the predecessor State was a contracting State in respect of the territory to which that succession of States relates. [Arts.17 and 18, Vienna Convention on Succession of States in respect of Treaties 1978]