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Nations pledge to end use of child soldiers

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7th February, 2007

THE ARTICLE

Nations pledge to end use of child soldiers

Nearly 60 nations have pledged not to use children in their armies. A document, called the Paris Commitments, was signed in France by 58 countries, including Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These countries still hit the headlines for having child soldiers. Two states that the United Nations says uses child soldiers - Burma and the Philippines - did not attend the Paris meeting. All 27 nations of the European Union added their weight to the promise to help disarm and rehabilitate underage soldiers, and prevent their recruitment. The U.N. estimates a quarter of a million youngsters are involved in over a dozen conflicts worldwide. As well as fighting, the kids serve as spies and sexual slaves. Girls make up nearly 40 percent of some armed groups. Their families often reject them when they return home.

The agreement is not yet part of the laws of any of the 58 countries. However, it is an important step forward. France's Foreign Minister said the document was more than just "good words." He insisted, "it is a text that will have great political value". A UNICEF spokesman stressed it is important that governments and not only NGOs are acting. The speaker who made the biggest impact in Paris was Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier in Sierra Leone. He picked up a gun when he was just 13, after his parents and brothers were killed in his country's civil war. He is now 26 and lives in New York. He said: "Taking a gun and shooting someone was as easy as drinking a glass of water." He reminded the world that: "No one is born violent. No child in Africa, Latin America or Asia wants to be part of war."

WARM-UPS

1. CHILDREN AT WAR: You are a child soldier. You are thirteen years old. Walk around the classroom and talk to other “child soldiers” about your life, fighting and why you joined an armed group. Talk also about the future.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

Armies / Sudan / Uganda / Congo / Burma / child soldiers / conflicts / spies / steps forward / good words / UNICEF / NGOs / guns / civil wars / violence

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. BEING THIRTEEN: With your partner(s), write down a list of things every 13-year-old in the world must have. Did you have these things when you were 13? Do all of the world’s 13-year-olds have these things?

4. FIGHTING CHILDREN: With your partner(s), talk about where in the world children might fight the bulleted points below. Are the fights normal? Do the fights happen in your country? Should the fights be stopped?

- in civil wars and other armed conflicts
- in playgrounds
- against parents
- with brothers and sisters
- to escape poverty
- in the streets
- to get an education
- disease

5. SENTENCE STARTERS: Finish these sentences. Show them to your partners. Talk about what you wrote.

- a) Child soldiers are _____
- b) UNICEF is _____
- c) Being 13 is _____
- d) Guns are _____
- e) Civil wars are _____
- f) Burma (Myanmar) is _____
- g) Violence is _____

6. CHILD SOLDIERS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with child soldiers. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. Every country has promised to end the use of child soldiers. T / F
- b. Different nations signed a document in Uganda. T / F
- c. A U.N. estimate believes 5 million children are fighting in conflicts. T / F
- d. Forty percent of child soldiers in many armed groups are girls. T / F
- e. The agreement is now law in 58 different countries. T / F
- f. A UNICEF spokesperson was happy that governments were acting. T / F
- g. An ex-child soldier gave a speech at the international meeting. T / F
- h. The child soldier said it was easier to find a gun than find water. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| a. pledged | ex- |
| b. commitments | put a stop to |
| c. rehabilitate | wars |
| d. prevent | historic |
| e. conflicts | doing something |
| f. important | promises |
| g. insisted | promised |
| h. acting | brutal |
| i. former | stressed |
| j. violent | reintegrate |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. Nearly 60 nations have pledged not | their weight to the promise |
| b. These countries still hit | laws of any of the 58 countries |
| c. nations of the European Union added | 40 percent of some armed groups |
| d. youngsters are involved in over a | not only NGOs are acting |
| e. Girls make up nearly | drinking a glass of water |
| f. The agreement is not yet part of the | to use children in their armies |
| g. the document was more than | dozen conflicts worldwide |
| h. important that governments and | "No one is born violent" |
| i. shooting someone was as easy as | the headlines for having child soldiers |
| j. He reminded the world that | just "good words." |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Nations pledge to end use of child soldiers

Nearly 60 nations have _____ not to use children in their armies. A document, called the Paris Commitments, was signed in France by 58 countries, including Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These countries still _____ the headlines for having child soldiers. Two states that the United Nations says uses child soldiers - Burma and the Philippines - did not attend the Paris meeting. All 27 nations of the European Union added their _____ to the promise to help disarm and rehabilitate _____ soldiers, and prevent their _____. The U.N. estimates a quarter of a million youngsters are involved in over a dozen _____ worldwide. As well as fighting, the kids serve as spies and sexual _____. Girls make up nearly 40 percent of some armed groups. Their families often _____ them when they return home.

recruitment

weight

hit

conflicts

reject

pledged

slaves

underage

The agreement is not yet part of the laws of any of the 58 countries. However, it is an important step _____. France's Foreign Minister said the document was more than just "good words." He insisted, "it is a _____ that will have great political _____". A UNICEF spokesman stressed it is important that governments and not only NGOs are acting. The speaker who made the biggest _____ in Paris was Ishmael Beah, a _____ child soldier in Sierra Leone. He picked up a gun when he was just 13, after his parents and brothers were killed in his country's _____ war. He is now 26 and lives in New York. He said: "Taking a gun and shooting someone was as easy as drinking a glass of water." He _____ the world that: "No one is born _____. No child in Africa, Latin America or Asia wants to be part of war."

civil

text

reminded

value

former

forward

violent

impact

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Nations pledge to end use of child soldiers

Nearly 60 nations have _____ children in their armies. A document, called the Paris Commitments, was signed in France by 58 countries, including Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These countries _____ for having child soldiers. Two states that the United Nations says uses child soldiers - Burma and the Philippines - did not attend the Paris meeting. All 27 nations of the European Union _____ the promise to help disarm and rehabilitate underage soldiers, and prevent their recruitment. The U.N. estimates a quarter of a million youngsters are involved _____ conflicts worldwide. As well as fighting, the kids serve as spies and sexual slaves. Girls _____ 40 percent of some armed groups. Their families often reject them when they return home.

The agreement is _____ laws of any of the 58 countries. However, it is an important step forward. France's Foreign Minister said the document was more than just "good words." He insisted, "_____ have great political value". A UNICEF spokesman stressed it is important that governments and not only NGOs are acting. The speaker _____ in Paris was Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier in Sierra Leone. He picked up a gun when he was just 13, after his parents and brothers were killed in _____. He is now 26 and lives in New York. He said: "Taking a gun and shooting someone was as easy as drinking a glass of water." He reminded the world that: "No one is born violent. No child in Africa, Latin America or Asia _____."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'child' and 'soldier'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "CHILD SOLDIER" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about child soldiers and how to stop armies from using them.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| • pledged | • laws |
| • hit | • good words |
| • attend | • NGOs |
| • disarm | • former |
| • worldwide | • water |
| • reject | • violent |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) Do you think this is a happy story?
- c) What do you know about child soldiers?
- d) Do you think there will ever be wars in which children do not fight?
- e) Why do you think army generals ask children to fight their wars?
- f) What do you think of the "Paris Commitments" agreement?
- g) Do you think Burma and the Philippines should be punished for not signing the agreement?
- h) What was the most dangerous thing you did when you were 13?
- i) From what age is it OK for people / children to join an army?
- j) Do you think children have a good time being soldiers?



STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What do you think about what you read?
- c) Do you think all countries will one day sign the agreement?
- d) How do you think organizations rehabilitate child soldiers?
- e) Do you think the agreement is little more than "good words"?
- f) Why do you think it has taken so long for countries to make an international agreement on child soldiers?
- g) What do you think it's like to pick up and use a gun from the age of 13?
- h) Do you think Ishmael Beah should become a UN ambassador?
- i) If no one is born violent, do you think we can ever stop being violent?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

CHILD SOLDIER PROFILE:

With your partner(s), create a profile of a child soldier. Use the table below to help you.

	Your ideas
Name Date of birth Country of birth	
Parents and family	
Early childhood	
Recruitment	
Army training	
Battles	
Fellow soldiers and friends	
Hobbies	
Future plans	

Present your profiles to the class / other teams.

Imagine your child soldier has stopped fighting. How will you rehabilitate him/her? What plans do you have for his/her future?

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

Nations pledge to end use of child soldiers

Nearly 60 nations have (1) _____ not to use children in their armies. A document, called the Paris Commitments, was signed in France by 58 countries, including Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These countries still (2) _____ the headlines for having child soldiers. Two states that the United Nations says uses child soldiers - Burma and the Philippines - did not attend the Paris meeting. All 27 nations of the European Union added their (3) _____ to the promise to help disarm and rehabilitate (4) _____ soldiers, and prevent their recruitment. The U.N. estimates a quarter of a million youngsters are involved in over a dozen conflicts worldwide. As well as fighting, the kids serve as spies and sexual slaves. Girls (5) _____ nearly 40 percent of some armed groups. Their families often (6) _____ them when they return home.

The agreement is not (7) _____ part of the laws of any of the 58 countries. However, it is an important step forward. France's Foreign Minister said the document was more than just "good words." He insisted, "It is a text that will have (8) _____ political value". A UNICEF spokesman stressed it is important that governments and not (9) _____ NGOs are acting. The speaker who made the biggest (10) _____ in Paris was Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier in Sierra Leone. He picked up a gun when he was just 13, after his parents and brothers were killed in his country's civil (11) _____. He is now 26 and lives in New York. He said: "Taking a gun and shooting someone was as easy as drinking a glass of water." He reminded the world that: "No one is born violent. No child in Africa, Latin America or Asia wants to be (12) _____ of war."

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) pledges | (b) pledging | (c) pledged | (d) pledge |
| 2. | (a) beat | (b) punch | (c) hit | (d) strike |
| 3. | (a) weight | (b) heaviness | (c) volume | (d) width |
| 4. | (a) underdog | (b) underneath | (c) underarm | (d) underage |
| 5. | (a) making up | (b) make up | (c) make-up | (d) cosmetics |
| 6. | (a) reject | (b) deject | (c) eject | (d) inject |
| 7. | (a) yet | (b) ago | (c) before | (d) still |
| 8. | (a) loads | (b) lots | (c) many | (d) great |
| 9. | (a) some | (b) only | (c) any | (d) lonely |
| 10. | (a) impact | (b) compact | (c) pact | (d) pacts |
| 11. | (a) skirmish | (b) war | (c) battle | (d) invasion |
| 12. | (a) bit | (b) partner | (c) party | (d) part |

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about child soldiers and the countries they fight in. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. THE PARIS COMMITMENTS: Search the Internet and find more information about the Paris Commitments. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

4. POSTER: Make a poster asking countries to stop using child soldiers. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Vote on who made the best poster.

5. CHILD SOLDIER DIARY: Imagine you are a child soldier. Write your diary for one day in your life. In your next lesson, talk about your diary entry with your partner(s).

6. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE: Write a newspaper article about child soldiers. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

7. LETTER: You are a child soldier. Write a letter to your leaders. Tell them about your life. Ask them three questions. Make three requests. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions and comment on your requests.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. F d. T e. F f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| a. pledged | promised |
| b. commitments | promises |
| c. rehabilitate | reintegrate |
| d. prevent | put a stop to |
| e. conflicts | wars |
| f. important | historic |
| g. insisted | stressed |
| h. acting | doing something |
| i. former | ex- |
| j. violent | brutal |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. Nearly 60 nations have pledged not | to use children in their armies |
| b. These countries still hit | the headlines for having child soldiers |
| c. nations of the European Union added | their weight to the promise |
| d. youngsters are involved in over a | dozen conflicts worldwide |
| e. Girls make up nearly | 40 percent of some armed groups |
| f. The agreement is not yet part of the | laws of any of the 58 countries |
| g. the document was more than | just "good words." |
| h. important that governments and | not only NGOs are acting |
| i. shooting someone was as easy as | drinking a glass of water |
| j. He reminded the world that | "No one is born violent" |

GAP FILL:

Nations pledge to end use of child soldiers

Nearly 60 nations have **pledged** not to use children in their armies. A document, called the Paris Commitments, was signed in France by 58 countries, including Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These countries still **hit** the headlines for having child soldiers. Two states that the United Nations says uses child soldiers - Burma and the Philippines - did not attend the Paris meeting. All 27 nations of the European Union added their **weight** to the promise to help disarm and rehabilitate **underage** soldiers, and prevent their **recruitment**. The U.N. estimates a quarter of a million youngsters are involved in over a dozen **conflicts** worldwide. As well as fighting, the kids serve as spies and sexual **slaves**. Girls make up nearly 40 percent of some armed groups. Their families often **reject** them when they return home.

The agreement is not yet part of the laws of any of the 58 countries. However, it is an important step **forward**. France's Foreign Minister said the document was more than just "good words." He insisted, "It is a **text** that will have great political **value**". A UNICEF spokesman stressed it is important that governments and not only NGOs are acting. The speaker who made the biggest **impact** in Paris was Ishmael Beah, a **former** child soldier in Sierra Leone. He picked up a gun when he was just 13, after his parents and brothers were killed in his country's **civil** war. He is now 26 and lives in New York. He said: "Taking a gun and shooting someone was as easy as drinking a glass of water." He **reminded** the world that: "No one is born **violent**. No child in Africa, Latin America or Asia wants to be part of war."

LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - c 2 - c 3 - a 4 - d 5 - b 6 - a 7 - a 8 - d 9 - b 10 - a 11 - b 12 - d