BSBMUN IX

ECOSOC
Study Guide

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Table of Contents

Letter from the Chairs

Dear delegates, it is with utter delight that we introduce you to the 9th Edition of BSBMUN! As chairs, we're determined to make this experience a very memorable one for all of you, and for that, we would like to extend you the invitation of reaching out to both of us in case any questions, doubts, or concerns arise. Our contact information will be linked down below. We put a lot of thought into preparing this study guide and choosing topics that are contentious and pertinent to discuss. The topics addressed in this year's ECOSOC Committee are the disposal of contaminated wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan and child labor in the crop cultivation and animal husbandry industries of developing countries.

For this discussion to have a good flow and be intellectually stimulating and engaging, we have high expectations for you! With that said, we hope you come prepared, and having done sufficient and in-depth research about your country's position on both topics. To better aid you in that process, we've compiled some information in this study guide, and we hope it can be of help. As always, we're looking forward to your innovative solutions and to a fruitful debate.

Best regards,

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Topic A: Addressing the Disposal of Fukushima Daiichi's Nuclear Wastewater

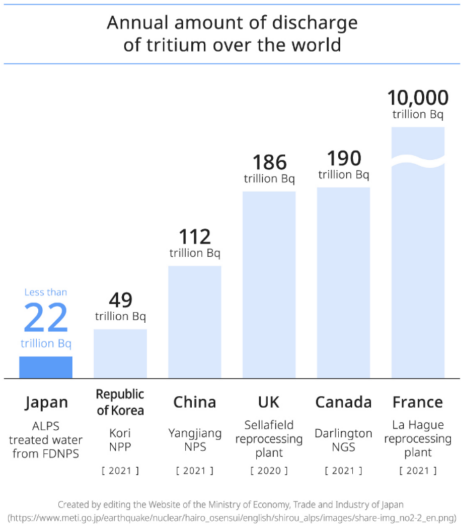
Background Information

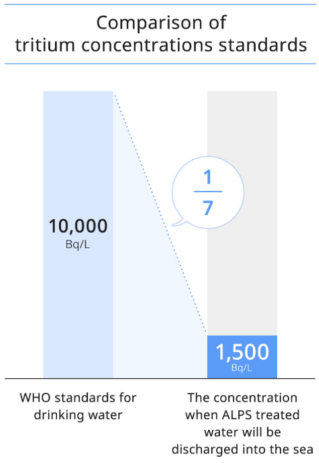
On March 11, 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake—of magnitude 9.0, the greatest ever recorded seismic event on the Richter scale being 9.5—triggered a massive tsunami approximately 130 kilometers from Sendai in the Miyagi prefecture. The 15-meter tsunami caused a 560 km^2 flood; casualties surmounted to 19,500 and over a million coastal buildings were destroyed or partly collapsed. Around an hour after the earthquake, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant was hit. There has not been a confirmed death toll of radiation sickness from the meltdown, yet over 100,000 residents of the local area were evacuated as a precaution. No longer capable of maintaining proper reactor cooling and water circulation, 12 out of the 13 power generators on site and several other operational functions were incapacitated. The reactor cores of units 1, 2, and 3 of the plant overheated, of which the radioactive fuel inside melted and emitted radionuclides. Due to risks over contamination, the emergency response team was unable to lessen the extent of the incident. Explosions within the reactors in units 1, 3, and 4—attributed to the leakage of hydrogen from reactor pressure vessels—wounded personnel and damaged the facility. Besides the direct releases into the ocean, such substances were exposed to the atmosphere and were later deposited onto the land and the sea. Due to the substantial radioactive spills over the fourth to sixth days of the occurrence, the disaster received the maximum possible severity rating of 7 from the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale ("Fukushima Daiichi Accident").

In order to cool down the nuclear reactors' fuel rods, the proprietor, the Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (TEPCO), has been pumping in water ever since the incident occurred. Additionally, groundwater and precipitation naturally infiltrate the facilities from their surroundings. However, all nuclear power plants require water to an extent for habitual functions, which vary according to several factors such as the safety

features implemented and its removal through the water disposal techniques of the plants. But when water interacts with melted fuels and other radioactive residues, it becomes contaminated. As a result, every day, the plant generates new contaminated water—surmounting to 1.3 million meters^3—which is then kept in massive containers ("IAEA Finds Japan's Plans…"). This poses a significant problem, however, as the storage of these more than 1,000 tanks are nearly full, and would likely burst and cause great devastation amid another natural disaster. In a process that is estimated to last around 30 years to complete, Japan officially began discharging the waste on August 24, 2023. The plan is to gradually escalate its operations until the plant has the capacity to discharge up to 22 trillion becquerels of tritium per year between the next two and three decades ("Background and Scientific Explanation…").

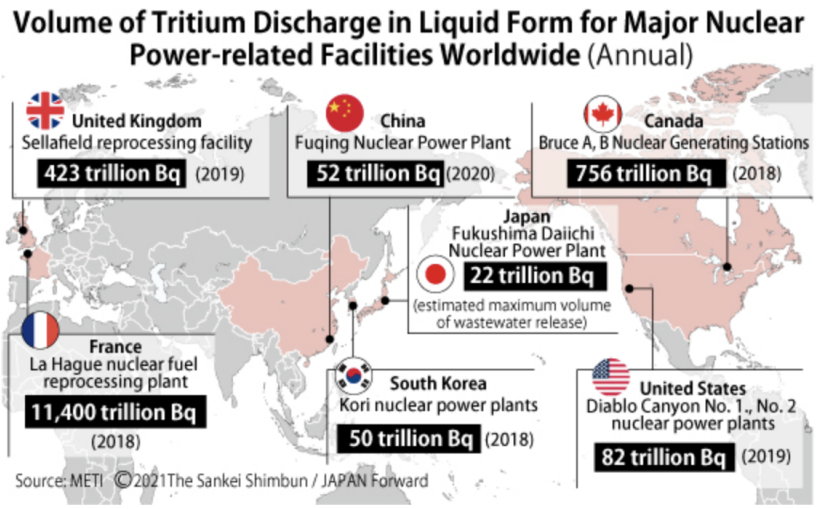
As of May 2023, Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) approved the treatment plan for the nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima Daiichi plant. The wastewater is filtered through the Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS), which reduces the majority of radioactive chemicals, including 62 radionuclides, to satisfactory safety standards—with the exception of carbon-14, strontium-90, and particularly tritium. Tritium is a naturally occurring isotope of hydrogen with two neutrons and has the least radiological effect of all radionuclides that can be found in seawater. The radioactive half-life of tritium is 12.32 years, meaning that, for a full atom to deplete due to radioactive decay, it takes 24.64 years. Within the





human body, the biological half-life of tritiated water is between 7 and 14 days. TEPCO claims that tritium "does not accumulate in the body tissue of humans" ("Background and Scientific Explanation…"). While it emits weak beta particles, if consumed in large quantities, tritium can pose a significant health hazard. Because there is no scientifically confirmed extraction method for these harmful chemicals, TEPCO dilutes this new solution with seawater to lower the remaining substances' concentration, which will then travel one kilometer via an underground tunnel system before being discharged into the ocean.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) fully endorses Japan's water treatment plans, finding them to be "consistent with international safety standards" ("IAEA Finds Japan's Plans.."). The IAEA concluded this after two years of implementing a task force on site, further advised by nuclear safety experts from eleven nations: the Argentine Republic, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of Canada, the People's Republic of China, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the Republic of Korea, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi stated that the impact of the chemicals, disposed of in a controlled and gradual manner, would only have a negligible impact upon consumption and on the environment. The IAEA has committed to providing the necessary surveillance be–fore, during, and after the water discharge, ensuring that those who were eva–



cuated over a decade prior can safely return to their homes. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Japan is not legally bound to the IAEA's proposals.

In regard to the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl in 1986, UN experts have pronounced themselves adamantly opposed to the disposal of the radioactive wastewater. This is due to scientific findings that ALPS has failed to rid the water of dangerous chemicals below regulatory levels. One specialist warned that “the tritium in the water organically binds to other molecules, moving up the food chain affecting plants and fish and humans” ("Japan: UN Experts…"). While other nations certainly, routinely and safely, dispose of nuclear-generated byproducts, the sheer volume created in Fukushima is on an unprecedented scale. The exposure to hazardous substances may lead to transboundary environmental harm and could affect millions of livelihoods in the Pacific. The international repercussions of Japan's actions are still reverberating, but a clear warning sign is China's intentions to prohibit all Japanese seafood imports—which would have an unprecedented economic fallout as China is Japan's primary food importer (Wong). Likewise, the Pacific Island Forum stands against Tokyo's actions. Greenpeace, a non-governmental organization praised for its activism in addressing environmental issues on a global scale, whose East Asia analysts constitute the discharge of the wastewater from Fukushima a violation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, affirms that claims stating that the discharge will only "take 30 years [are] inaccurate as in reality, it will continue into the next century. Viable alternatives to discharge, specifically long-term storage and processing, have been ignored by the Japanese government" (Ignoring Science, Environmental Protection…").

Key Terms

Becquerels (Bq)
The conventional measurement of a material in units of one atomic decay per second.

Radioactive decay
The emission of energy in the form of ionizing radiation, which can include alpha particles, beta particles, or gamma rays. Radioactive decay also occurs in unbalanced atoms called radionuclides.

Beta particles
The high-energy, high-speed emission of unstable atomic nuclei undergoing the disintegration process of beta decay, either in the form of an electron (unit negative charge) or a positron (unit positive charge).

Radionuclide
An atom with a specific number of protons and neutrons that exhibits radioactivity.

Isotope
The variants of an atom that differ in their nucleon by having a different number of neutrons.

Biological half-life
The time required for a biological system, such as the human body, to eliminate 50% of a chemical substance naturally.

Position of Major Blocs and Countries

Japan

Since 1973, Japan strategically prioritized nuclear energy production, which accounted for 30% of the country's energy consumption up to the disaster in 2011, and had been projected to grow to 40% by 2017 prior to the meltdown. Japan currently has 33 nuclear power reactors in operation ("Fukushima Daiichi Accident…"). On August 22, 2023, the government announced that TEPCO may proceed with its preparations for the discharge of the ALPS-treated water. This executive decision triggered protests both domestically and abroad, as demonstrations occurred in Tokyo, Seoul, and Hong Kong. The Japanese government especially clarified that the discharge would not be in order if it endangered the lives of people for Japan and Pacific Island nations, as well as having a detrimental effect on the marine environment ("Publication of the Report…"). In response to China's claims of polluting international waters that impact Chinese territory, Japan consistently emphasized the IAEA's research, which suggested negligible effects from the discharge and highlighted the fact that no other scientific solution was viable. The country adamantly believes that the regulated discharge is essential to empty the containers and thus enable the decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

China

Beijing's announcement that it will ban all imports of seafood from Japan, along with the already-in-effect embargo on seafood from Fukushima and neighboring prefectures, has presented an economic fallout as China is Japan’s primary seafood importer. This would pose a trade crisis as Mainland China and Hong Kong import over $1.1 billion worth of Japanese seafood annually, constituting over half of the supplier's seafood exports (Wong). Given Japan's recent alignment with the United States and its support for Taiwan's separatist aspirations—which have further strained Sino-Japanese relations—China's actions regarding the discharge of the wastewater may be politically motivated. Protests against the disposal of these chemicals took place in Hong Kong. Article 47 of the prevention and control of radioactive pollution law states that "it is prohibited to import radioactive wastes or radioactively polluted articles into the territory of the People's Republic of China or to transfer them via the territory of the People's Republic of China" (Li). Thus, China expects Japan to comply with its standards and regulations as the disposal of the wastewater will affect the waters within Chinese jurisdiction.

United States

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed the country's satisfaction with Japan's safe, transparent, and scientifically-verified process. The American Food and Drug Administration—FDA—deactivated Import Alert #99-33 for products deriving from the Japanese prefectures near the Fukushima facility in September of 2021. The legal basis for this import alert was the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act's section 801(a)(2), which states that FDA-regulated goods can be refused entry into the nation's borders if they are prohibited or restricted in their country of origin. Thus, the import alert was formulated to adhere to the prefecture-level restrictions in Japan ("FDA Response…"). Nonetheless, the National Library of Medicine contends that, by ignoring the other four disposal options (ground injection, discharge as steam, discharge as hydrogen, and solidification for underground burial), Japan violated the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It asserts that Japan should be held accountable for national and civil liabilities (Li).

South Korea

Similarly to China, the Republic of Korea has also imposed restrictions on Japanese seafood imports. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo stated that "what is important now is whether Japan, as it promised to the international community, strictly follows the scientific standards and transparently provides information" (Wong). Protests against the disposal of the contaminated wastewater generated in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant occurred in Seoul on August 26, 2023. Due to their affiliations with the United States and shared concerns regarding China and North Korea, South Korea and Japan have cultivated developing diplomatic ties despite enduring historical grievances.

France & United Kingdom

The European Union endorses the Japanese authorities' timely and transparent updates on the issue regarding the Fukushima power plant on a regular basis, and welcomes the comprehensive report by the International Atomic Energy Agency presented on July 4, 2023 (Press and information team of the Delegation to JAPAN). According to data compiled by the Japanese Ministry of the Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI), which was made publicly available on April 13, the La Hague nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in France emitted around 11,400 trillion Bq into the ocean and roughly 60 trillion Bq into the atmosphere, significantly below Japan's predicted discharge. Likewise, the Sellafield facility in the United Kingdom released around 423 trillion Bq of tritium in liquid and 56 trillion Bq in vapor form into the sea and atmosphere in 2019 (Arafune).

Questions to Consider

1) Does your country possess any water-bound nuclear power plants, if any? What are their standard protocols?

2) How does your nation dispose of waste generated as a byproduct of energy production?

3) What measures has your country implemented to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, with a particular emphasis on flood and tsunami prevention and response?

4) What conclusions were achieved by research, specifically conducted within your demographic or region, on the impacts of radionuclides such as tritium?

5) Has any major political leader within your country or domestic organization taken a clear stance on the matter?

6) Does your country pertain to any association or intergovernmental organization that has addressed this issue?

7) What recommendations and solutions would your country propose for Japan to adopt in regard to this issue?

Further Research

- TEPCO'S Official Documentation of the ALPS Treatment
- Information on Nuclear Power in Japan
- Multiple Legal Perspectives Represented in the American National Library of Medicine
- Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage
- United Nations Convention on Third Party Liability in the Field of Nuclear Energy

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Topic B: Discussing Child Labor in the Crop Cultivation and Animal Husbandry Industries of Developing Countries

Background Information

The International Labour Organization (ILO), specialized agency of the UN, defines child labour as the "work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development". Such work, therefore, is ultimately "mentally, physically, socially morally dangerous and harmful to children", and can interfere with their education. The ILO characterizes child labour into two broad categories, the worst forms of child labour and the hazardous forms of child labour. The former refers to the enslaving and social separation of children that are thus exposed to hazards, illnesses or left to fend for themselves, usually from a very young age. The latter refers to the work practiced by children that is inherently hazardous, likely to cause damage to their health, safety or dignity, which includes long hours of work, operation of dangerous machinery or tools, or exposure to toxic substances ("What is child labour (IPEC)").

The ILO's Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which has been widely ratified by most countries, expresses the severity of the problem of child labour and urges countries to take effective and immediate action to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour of children under the ages of 18 ("Convention C182"). Furthermore, in accordance to Goal 8 in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030, adopted in 2015, it has been called for the immediate action of state leaders to eradicate all forms of child labour, in the pursuit of achieving decent work environments for all, ensuring children's rights to freedom and leisure. Thus, the Sustainable Goals aim to promote specific action to align the minimum age for employment to the age of completion of compulsory schooling ("World Day Against Child Labour).

A myriad of factors can contribute to driving children into child labour, such as human trafficking, poverty, lack of access to education, climate crises, and lack of law enforcement and inspection, especially in rural areas, to discover and rescue children in situations of child labour. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the increase in the number of children in poverty-stricken households, creating the potential for them to be inserted into the workforce as a means to increase the family income, a problem

aggravated by the shutting-down of schools and imposed social distancing (UNICEF and ILO).

The agricultural industry is the biggest employer of child labour of both boys and girls. In 2020, 70% of all child labour worldwide was in the agricultural sector, accounting for 112 million children from ages 5 to 17. These figures account for agricultural activities such as "family subsistence and smallholder farming, commercial plantations and other forms of commercial farming, agro-industrial complexes, capture fisheries, aquaculture, postharvest fish processing and forestry" (UNICEF and ILO).

Child labour in agriculture is mostly regarded as hazardous due to the nature of the methods, tools and activities involved - these include the handling of dangerous and sharp tools, long working hours usually in harsh weathers, the carrying of heavy loads and exposure to harmful chemicals in pesticides and fertilizers (European Commission). As evidenced by the graph above, child labour in agriculture is most prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa, including countries such as Somalia, Tanzania and Ethiopia.

Child labour is widely used in agricultural sectors for the production of commodities that are then exported internationally through global supply chains. An international commitment has been made to eliminate child labour by 2025 through the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (European Commission). Several initiatives have been adopted by countries worldwide in the attempt of alleviating child labour, one of them being the CLEAR Cotton Project, co-founded by the European Union (EU) and the ILO in 2018, implemented by the latter in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (“CLEAR Cotton”).

Key Terms

Animal husbandry

Farming of animals to produce goods (such as milk, meat, eggs, etc); Raising livestock. Can be done in large scale for export, or in smaller scale for subsistence.

Commodities

Raw materials or agricultural products that are produced to be sold. Mostly used in the manufacturing of other goods and services.

Crop cultivation

Plantation and cultivation of organic materials, such as commodities. Can be done in large scale for export, or in smaller scale for subsistence.

Developing countries

Countries with small economic activity, usually not industrialized, with low or moderate Human Development Index (HDI) and low standards of living.

Hazardous forms of child labour

"The work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children" (“What is child labour (IPEC)”).

Worst forms of child labour

"Involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities – often at a very early age" (“What is child labour (IPEC)”).

Position of Major Blocs and Countries

United States

In the agricultural sector, children work for long hours in hazardous conditions with no safety training. Many of the targeted children are immigrants from Latin America (Wurth). "In a report released in October 2021, the Child Labor Coalition and Lawyers for Good Government estimated that, in the US, 330,000 children younger than 16 years old—including over 80,000 children younger than 10 years old—are hired workers in agriculture" (Iannacci).

China

China is infamous for international concerns over human rights violations of ethnic minorities, such as children in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and in Gansu province that are forced to work in the cotton harvesting season. Around forty thousand to one million children are estimated to work per year ("List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor"). To mitigate this problem, China has "ratified the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) on 28 April 1999, and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) on 8 August 2002" ("Child labour in China and Mongolia").

Madagascar

Madagascar has made moderate advancements in 2022 to alleviate the issue of child labour. One of these advancements was the launching of a new governmental action plan and the Regional Committee in the Fight Against Child Labour of Fianaratsoa. In Madagascar, children are exposed to the worst forms of child labour, performing hazardous work in the agricultural sector of vanilla and rice production. In 2019, 43.2% of children from ages 5 to 14 were working. In early 2022, cyclones and climate crises in Madagascar exacerbated food insecurity and poverty, thus making vulnerable children prone to labour exploitation ("Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor").

Cameroon

Cameroon has made moderate advancements in 2022 to mitigate the worst forms of child labour, yet is most prominent in the production of cocoa. In 2021, 43.7% of the child population, aged 5 to 14, is working. In the agricultural sector, children are involved in the production of bananas, kola nuts, and coffee. This includes the handling of pesticides and machetes. Furthermore, violence in Cameroon and its neighboring regions has impacted children's schooling ("Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor").

India

In 2021, 3,253,202 children from ages 5 to 14 were working. Children in India are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour, sometimes also as a result of human trafficking. In the agricultural sector, children are exposed to activities such as farming, cultivating cotton and rice, harvesting sugar cane and coconut. India's National Policy on Child Labor has, in 2022, provided services to help rehabilitate thousands of children from child labor ("Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor").

Tanzania

In 2020, 20.4% of children from ages 5 to 14 were working, 84.8% of which were working in the agricultural sector. In agriculture, children were engaged in hazardous work that included weeding, harvesting and fishing, as well as processing coffee, sugarcane and tobacco crops, livestock herding and tending cattle. Children engaged in these activities are generally from rural areas and in situations of poverty or orphans. Access to education and schooling in such rural areas is a challenge that induces lack of teachers and infrastructure ("Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor").

Peru

18.7% of Peruvian children from 5 to 14 years of age were working in 2021. Children from indigenous communities are specifically vulnerable to labour. In the agricultural sector, children in Peru have been engaged in hazardous work including harvesting rice and Brazil nuts, fishing and logging timber, as well as clearing forest land for mining. Peru's situation after the COVID-19 pandemic regarding the educational system has increased children's vulnerability to labour exploitation. Striving to mitigate child labour, Peru launched a National Plan to Combat Forced Labor, that lasted form 2019 until 2022 ("Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor").

Indonesia

In 2018, 3.7% of Indonesian children from ages 10 to 14 were working, 61.6% of which worked in the agricultural sector. This includes working on activities such as harvesting palm oil, tobacco and eucalyptus, which exposes them to pesticides and fertilizers—recognized forms of hazardous working conditions; this results in children working for long hours and sometimes leaving school ("Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor").

Argentina

In 2021, 5.35% of Argentine children from 5 to 14 were working. In 2022, Argentina has made significant progress to eliminate child labour, publishing its National Plan for the Regularization of Labor. In the agricultural sector, children work in harvesting commodities such as tomatoes, cotton, yerba mate and tobacco ("Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor").

Brazil

In 2022, Brazil had the highest record of rescue operations to retrieve children in situations of child labour in the past six years. 2.1% of children from 5 to 14 years of age were found to be working in 2023, 56.5% of which were engaged in activities in the agricultural sector, including harvesting açai, bananas, cocoa, coffee, cotton, sugarcane, tobacco and pineapples, as well as cattle ranching, raising livestock and slaughtering animals for beef production. In 2019, the Brazilian government established the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Working Adolescents III, which, among other purposes, aimed to prevent and eradicate child labour, raise public awareness, and strengthen family security and stability through the increase of employment opportunities ("Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor").

Mexico

In 2020, 4% of children aged 5 to 14 were found to be working, 30.3% of which worked in the agricultural sector. Child labour was utilized in activities such as the production of chile peppers, coffee, cotton, tobacco, sugarcane, and raising cattle. Indigenous children, who are less likely to have access to education, are more vulnerable to working in agriculture. Moreover, organized crime groups in rural areas actively recruit children for child labour, as well as using them for drug transportation. Child labour in Mexico's agricultural sector was deemed hazardous due to the long working hours, use of dangerous tools and the handling of pesticides ("Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor").

Zimbabwe

Until 2022, Zimbabwe had made minimal progress to eliminate child labour. In 2021, 14.8% of children from 5 to 14 years of age are working, 96.7% of which are involved in the agricultural sector. Children are engaged in the worst forms of forced labour in activities such as farming, production of tobacco, cotton, sugarcane, and cattle herding. Zimbabwe's recent economic and environmental conditions have contributed to increasing children's vulnerabilities to labour exploitation. In tobacco farms, children from ages of 8 to 17 are continuously exposed to toxic chemicals and unsafe conditions ("Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor").

Israel

Palestinian children, as young as 11 years old, have been found working in Israeli farms in the West Bank. Many of these children drop out of school and work in hazardous conditions, in crops of onions, asparagus, tomatoes, and other crops (“Ripe for Abuse”).

Questions to Consider

1) Where should the line be drawn between child labour and apprenticeship?
2) What is the role of education in the protection of children all over the world?
3) What are some measures and policies that governments can implement to mitigate this issue nationally?
4) What are some measures and policies that international organizations can implement to mitigate these issues internationally? How would these figures be monitored on an international scale?
5) How can the issue of child labour be more efficiently tackled in isolated rural areas, especially in developing countries?
6) How is child labour tied to industrialization, and thus, how can economic development play a role in mitigating child labour cases in different countries?
7) Consider the role of the UN: How can this international organization ensure all countries, even in their remote areas, are abiding to the ratified conventions?

Further Research

- More information about your country's statistics on child labour, as well as governmental efforts, policies and social programs can be found here: Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor and ILAB per Country and Region
- Regions and countries (IPEC)
- Reducing Child Labour in Agriculture through good agricultural practices: FAO experiences
- Reshaping agriculture in Africa to end child labour | FAO Stories
- Agricultural child labour: A persistent global issue seemingly immune to eradication attempts
- Child labor remains a problem in the United States - The Washington Post

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