

1924

The League of Nations adopts the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child, drafted by Eglantyne Jebb, founder of the Save the Children Fund. The Declaration articulates that all people owe children the right to: means for their development; special help in times of need; priority for relief; economic freedom and protection from exploitation; and an upbringing that instils social consciousness and duty.

1946

The United Nations General Assembly establishes the International Children's Emergency Fund, UNICEF, with an emphasis on children throughout the world.

1948

The United Nations General Assembly passes the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), in which Article 25 entitles mothers and children to 'special care and assistance' and 'social protection'.

1959

The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which recognizes, among other rights, children's rights to education, play, a supportive environment and health care.

1966

With the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, United Nations Member States promise to uphold equal rights – including education and protection – for all children.

1968

The International Conference on Human Rights is convened to evaluate the progress made by countries in the 20 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. An agenda for future work is drafted and national commitments to upholding human rights are bolstered.

1973

The International Labour Organization adopts Convention 138, which sets 18 as the minimum age for undertaking work that might be hazardous to a person's health, safety or morals.

1974

Concerned about the vulnerability of women and children in emergency and conflict situations, the General Assembly calls on Member States to observe the [Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict](#). The Declaration prohibits attacks against or imprisonment of civilian women and children, and upholds the sanctity of the rights of women and children during armed conflict.

1978

The Commission on Human Rights puts forth a draft of a Convention on the Rights of the Child for consideration by a working group of Member States, agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

1979

To mark the twentieth anniversary of the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the United Nations General Assembly declares 1979 as the International Year of the Child, in which UNICEF plays a leading role.

1985

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice detail the principles of a justice system that promotes the best interests of the child, including education and social services and proportional treatment for child detainees.

1989

The [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and widely acclaimed as a landmark achievement for human rights, recognizing the roles of children as social, economic, political, civil and cultural actors. The Convention guarantees and sets minimum standards for protecting the rights of children in all capacities. UNICEF, which helped draft the Convention, is named in the document as a source of expertise.

1990

The World Summit for Children is held in New York. The [Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency](#) outline strategies for preventing criminality and protecting young people at high social risk.

1991

Experts from UNICEF, Save the Children, Defence for Children International and other organizations meet to discuss data gathered from the reporting process of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The meeting leads to the formal establishment of the [Child Rights International Network](#) (CRIN) in 1995.

1999

The International Labour Organization (ILO) adopts the [Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention](#), calling for the immediate prohibition and elimination of any form of work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. UNICEF has been working with the ILO since 1996 to promote the ratification of international labour standards and policies concerning child labour.

2000

The United Nations General Assembly adopts two [Optional Protocols](#) to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, obligating State Parties to take key actions to prevent children from participating in hostilities during armed conflict and to end the sale, sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

2002

At the United Nations Special Session on Children, child delegates address the General Assembly for the first time. The World Fit for Children agenda was adopted outlining specific goals for improving the prospects of children over the next decade.

2006

UNICEF co-publishes the [Manual for the Measurement of Juvenile Justice Indicators](#) with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The Manual enables governments to assess the condition of their juvenile justice systems and make reforms as necessary.

2010

The United Nations Secretary-General issues the Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2011

A new [Optional Protocol](#) to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child is adopted. Under this

Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, the Committee on the Rights of the Child can field complaints of child rights violations and undertake investigations.

2015

Somalia and South Sudan ratify the Convention. The Convention is the most widely ratified international instrument with 196 States. Only the United States has not ratified to date.