Forum:	**Commission on the Rights of the Child**
Question of:	**Preventing the separation of children and parents during immigration**
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I. Description of the Issue

Please introduce your topic clearly and logically and provide the reader with the main ideas and aspects about your topic. It is important, that you explain even the most basic knowledge, so that even people who are completely uninformed, can understand it and inform themselves. Moreover, it should also be accordingly informative, so that persons who might visit your committee or council can read about the topic of the (ongoing) debate and follow it. Therefore, please ask yourself the following questions: What is the issue exactly about? How can the main theme be defined? In which direction is the debate supposed to go? Are there countries or parties involved in this topic that must necessarily be mentioned? Which geographical regions are affected and what does that mean for other nations and the UN?

The separation of children from their parents or primary caregivers during immigration is a grave humanitarian concern that affects some of the world's most vulnerable people. It occurs when families are split apart at borders, during detention procedures, or through administrative decisions that fail to prioritise the child's best interests. In the context of migration, such separations can happen for several reasons, including irregular border crossings, asylum procedures, detention policies, or the absence of adequate family-tracing systems. Whatever the cause, the consequences are often severe and long-lasting.

At its core, this issue concerns the protection of children's rights in migration settings. Children are entitled to safety, family unity, and special protection under international law, yet these rights are not always respected in practice. Separation can lead to trauma, anxiety, disrupted development, and difficulties in accessing education, healthcare, and legal support. For young children especially, losing contact with a parent or guardian can create immediate emotional distress and long-term psychological harm.

The debate on this topic is therefore not only about migration control, but also about how states balance border management with human rights obligations. Governments may argue that immigration enforcement is necessary to maintain orderly systems, verify family relationships, or respond to security concerns. However, these administrative goals must not override the fundamental principle that children should not be unnecessarily separated from their families. A rights-based approach requires states to use alternatives such as family unity policies, community-based supervision, child-sensitive asylum procedures, and rapid reunification mechanisms.

This issue affects all regions that experience significant migration flows, including North America, Europe, the Mediterranean region, parts of Latin America, and areas affected by conflict or economic instability. It is also relevant to the United Nations because it touches on refugee protection, child welfare, and the implementation of international conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Possible policy directions include preventing family separation at the point of entry, establishing clear standards for detention, ensuring legal representation for migrant families, and creating faster cross-border cooperation to reunite children with their caregivers. Ultimately, the goal should be to make sure that migration procedures never place children at unnecessary risk and that the family unit remains protected wherever possible.

II. **Background information**

Despite these developments, family separation continued to occur in many regions, especially during periods of stricter immigration enforcement. In some cases, states used detention as a tool to process migrant families, which often led to children being taken away from their caregivers. In other cases, children arrived without parents because families had been forced to flee under dangerous conditions, or because they were separated during migration journeys and could not be reunited quickly. The growth of irregular migration routes in the late 20th and early 21st centuries made this problem more visible, particularly at external borders and in transit countries.

A major turning point in public awareness came when reports of child separation received global media attention. These cases showed that administrative policies could have deeply traumatic effects on children, even when they were presented as temporary or necessary by governments. Human rights organisations and child protection agencies began to criticise the practice more strongly, arguing that family unity should be preserved unless there is a clear and serious reason to do otherwise. This shift helped transform the issue from a domestic immigration matter into a major international human rights concern.

In recent decades, the debate has also been shaped by conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and other regions, as well as by migration pressure in the Mediterranean, the Americas, and parts of Africa and Asia. These movements have increased the number of children crossing borders in vulnerable circumstances, often without stable protection. At the same time, states have faced political pressure to appear firm on migration, which has sometimes led to harsher border practices. The historical development of this issue therefore shows a continuing tension between state sovereignty and the obligation to protect children.

Today, the long history of family separation in migration demonstrates why this issue remains unresolved. Although international law now offers stronger protection than in the past, implementation still depends on national policy, political will, and effective child-sensitive procedures. Understanding this background is essential, because it shows that the problem is not isolated, but part of a long-standing conflict between migration control and human dignity.

III. **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

The issue of preventing the separation of children during immigration involves a broad range of countries, especially those that function as destination states, transit states, or countries of

origin. It is most visible in states that receive large numbers of asylum seekers and migrants, because these governments must decide how to process families at borders, in detention centres, and within asylum systems. Countries such as the United States, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia are frequently mentioned in this context because they have all faced political and legal debates over border control, detention policy, and the treatment of migrant children. In these states, the central question is how to maintain orderly migration procedures without violating the right to family unity.

The United States has played a particularly prominent role in the international debate because family separation at the border received major public attention and became a symbol of harsh immigration enforcement. This made the issue far more visible to the global public and encouraged other states and organizations to address the consequences of separating children from caregivers. In Europe, countries such as Greece, Italy, Spain, and Germany have faced similar concerns due to migration across the Mediterranean and the arrival of unaccompanied or separated minors. In these cases, governments are often under pressure to process arrivals quickly, but rushed procedures can increase the risk that families are split apart or that children are left without proper protection.

At the same time, countries of origin also play an important role in this issue. Many families leave states affected by war, poverty, corruption, or persecution, including countries in the Middle East, parts of Africa, Latin America, and South Asia. In such situations, children may be separated from their parents before or during the journey because of conflict, dangerous border crossings, smugglers, detention, or the lack of safe legal migration channels. Therefore, the problem is not limited to receiving states alone, but is linked to broader patterns of displacement and global inequality.

Transit countries are equally significant because they often become the places where families are temporarily trapped, detained, or divided. This is especially relevant in regions along major migration routes, such as North Africa, the Balkans, and Central America. These countries may not always have the resources to provide adequate child protection systems, which increases the risk of separation and makes reunification more difficult. For that reason, international cooperation is essential, since one state acting alone cannot solve a problem that often begins far earlier and continues across several borders.

Among the most important organizations involved are UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and regional human rights institutions such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). UNICEF is one of the strongest advocates for keeping refugee and migrant families together and for ensuring that children are treated first and foremost as children, not simply as migrants. UNHCR plays a major role in the protection of refugees and asylum seekers and repeatedly stresses that the best interests of the child and family unity must guide state policy.

The IOM is especially important in the practical side of migration management. It works on family tracing, safe migration, and support for separated families, often in cooperation with other humanitarian actors. The ICRC also contributes by searching for missing relatives, assisting in family reunification, and responding to situations where migration overlaps with conflict, detention, or humanitarian emergencies. In several contexts, including in Egypt, the ICRC and IOM have collaborated to support families facing separation, showing how operational cooperation can help reduce harm on the ground.

Regional human rights bodies have also become increasingly active. The IACHR, for example, issued practical guidance on protecting family unity and reunification in situations of human mobility, recommending that states prevent separation and take steps to reunite families who have already been divided. This is important because it shows that the issue is not only a humanitarian concern, but also a legal obligation under human rights standards. Such guidance is especially relevant for MUN debates, since it demonstrates how international norms can influence national policy even when states retain control over their borders.

Another important group of actors includes civil society organisations, legal aid groups, and child protection NGOs. These actors often provide direct support to migrant families, document abuses, and advocate for reforms in detention and asylum systems. Their work is essential because many families do not have immediate access to legal representation or information about their rights. In practice, this means that organizations on the ground often become the first line of protection when state systems fail to prevent separation.

The relationship between countries and organizations in this issue is therefore highly interconnected. States create and enforce migration policies, but international and regional organisations help define standards, monitor compliance, and provide humanitarian support. Countries affected by migration pressure often rely on these institutions for guidance and assistance, while the organizations depend on state cooperation to reunite families and protect children.

IV. **Timeline of events**

The prevention of family separation during immigration enforcement has emerged as a defining issue in global migration governance over the past three decades, driven by the convergence of international human rights law, refugee protection norms, and evolving state practices. While the United States' highly publicized "zero tolerance" policy of 2018 catalyzed renewed international attention, efforts to uphold family unity in the context of migration have deep roots in multilateral frameworks, regional legal instruments, and national policy reforms across Europe, Australia, Canada, and beyond. This chapter traces the major international milestones, legal developments, and policy shifts that have shaped the global response to the separation of children from their parents or guardians during immigration processes. The foundational legal basis for preventing family separation in migration contexts derives from the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which enshrines the principle that children shall not be separated from their parents against their will except when necessary and in the child's best interests. This provision, interpreted alongside the right to family life under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), established a normative expectation that states prioritize family unity in all administrative and judicial proceedings involving migrant and refugee children. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) issued operational guidance emphasizing that family reunification should be expedited for separated children and that detention of families should be avoided wherever possible. In 2003, the European Union adopted Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification, marking the first binding regional legislation to harmonize conditions under which third-country nationals legally residing in EU Member States could be joined by family members, thereby institutionalizing family unity as a core principle of EU

migration policy. Implementation reports in 2008 and 2011, followed by a Commission Green Paper in 2011 and guidance in 2014, reinforced the directive's role in promoting socio-cultural stability and integration across the EU. The period from 2011 to 2018 witnessed a significant consolidation of international norms centered on the best interests of the child in migration contexts. UNHCR's 2011–2012 guidelines on separated children in Europe and subsequent global policy notes underscored that separation should be a measure of last resort and called for robust procedural safeguards, including best interests assessments and child-sensitive interview procedures. In 2016, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted by all UN Member States, explicitly committed governments to protect the human rights of migrant children and to develop pathways for safe and regular migration that enable families to move together. This commitment was operationalized in December 2018 with the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), which included Objective 7 on addressing vulnerabilities in migration and specifically called for specialized procedures to identify, refer, care for, and support family reunification for unaccompanied and separated children. The GCM's child rights perspective, articulated through interventions by UNICEF and the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs, further emphasized that family unity reduces irregular migration, trafficking, and smuggling while enhancing children's access to education, health, and protection services. Parallel to these global developments, regional and national policy frameworks evolved to address the risk of family separation in diverse migration contexts. In the European Union, the 2015–2016 refugee crisis prompted both restrictive border measures and renewed emphasis on family reunification rights, with the European Asylum Support Office (now EUAA) issuing guidance in 2022 on legal status and family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection. A 2025 European Migration Network study documented how Member States increasingly differentiated their approaches, facilitating reunification for skilled workers while imposing stricter requirements—such as age thresholds, waiting periods, and income proof—for other categories, though exemptions were often applied for vulnerable groups including unaccompanied minors and beneficiaries of international protection. In Australia, longstanding policies of mandatory immigration detention and offshore processing drew criticism from human rights bodies for resulting in de facto family separations, prompting incremental reforms in the late 2010s to expand community placement options for families with children. Canada, by contrast, maintained a relatively facilitative stance on family reunification, though advocacy groups continued to highlight gaps in inland protection for

families facing deportation. In the United States, the 2018 “zero tolerance” policy and subsequent court-ordered reunification efforts under *Ms. L v. ICE* became a focal point for global scrutiny, with UN human rights mechanisms and civil society organizations citing the episode as a cautionary example of the human costs of enforcement-driven migration policies. From 2019 onward, the institutionalization of family unity principles accelerated through multilateral guidance and interagency coordination. In December 2024, UNHCR published comprehensive Guidelines on international legal standards relating to family reunification for refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection, synthesizing decades of jurisprudence and operational practice to clarify states’ obligations under international and regional law. These guidelines emphasized that procedural barriers—such as documentary requirements, income thresholds, and mode-of-arrival restrictions—must not disproportionately impede family reunification, particularly for children. The OHCHR’s GCM Family Unity Initiative further advanced this agenda by promoting cross-border cooperation, digitalized application procedures, and priority processing for minors as good practices. By 2025, the EU’s second implementation report on the Family Reunification Directive, alongside the Fitness Check on legal migration, reinforced the directive’s role in aligning national laws with EU case law and fundamental rights standards. Meanwhile, the U.S. Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families, established in 2021, continued its work into 2026, having identified thousands of separated children and facilitated hundreds of reunifications, serving as a model for intergovernmental coordination in post-crisis remediation.

Despite these advances, significant challenges persist in translating normative commitments into consistent practice. Advocacy groups report that family separations continue to occur in various jurisdictions through interior enforcement actions, expedited removals, and detention practices that disproportionately affect children and their caregivers. Administrative delays, high costs, and documentation barriers remain particularly acute for applicants from conflict-affected regions, while the lack of autonomous residence status for reunited family members can perpetuate dependency and vulnerability. Looking forward, the integration of family unity principles into national migration strategies, the expansion of safe and regular pathways for families to move together, and the strengthening of cross-border child protection systems will be critical to preventing future separations and ensuring that the right to family life is meaningfully realized for all migrant and refugee children

V. Previous attempts to solve the issue

Efforts to prevent the separation of children from their parents during immigration enforcement have been undertaken at both international and national levels through a combination of legal frameworks, policy reforms, operational guidelines, and targeted interventions. These initiatives have sought to operationalize the principle of family unity enshrined in international human rights and refugee law, with varying degrees of success across different jurisdictions. This chapter examines the major attempts to address this issue, evaluates their effectiveness, and identifies the structural and practical factors that have influenced their outcomes.

The most sustained international efforts to prevent family separation have centered on the development of normative frameworks and operational guidance that translate abstract legal principles into actionable standards. The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) established the foundational legal obligation that children shall not be separated from their parents except when necessary and in their best interests, a principle subsequently reinforced through the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 6 (2005) on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin. These instruments mandated that states prioritize family tracing and reunification, appoint independent guardians for unaccompanied children, and ensure that immigration detention is never used as a deterrent to migration.

Building on these foundations, UNHCR issued a series of guidelines and policy notes throughout the 2000s and 2010s, including the 2011 *Note on Family Reunification* and the 2024 *Operational Guidelines on Complementary Pathways*, which explicitly called for expedited procedures to reunite separated children with their parents and for the avoidance of family separation as a matter of policy. The 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) further institutionalized these expectations, with the GCM's Objectives 5 and 7 committing states to enhance regular migration pathways that uphold family life and to facilitate family reunification for unaccompanied and separated children. The GCM Family Unity Initiative, launched ahead of the 2026 International Migration Review Forum, has sought to galvanize

state pledges to expand family accompaniment and reunification pathways, reduce procedural barriers, and integrate family unity considerations into national migration strategies.

At the regional level, the European Union's 2003 Family Reunification Directive (2003/86/EC) represented the first binding legislative effort to harmonize conditions under which third-country nationals could be joined by family members, thereby creating a continent-wide framework for preventing and remedying family separation. Subsequent implementation reports, a 2011 Green Paper, and a 2025 European Migration Network study documented both progress and persistent challenges, including restrictive income requirements, lengthy waiting periods, and divergent national interpretations of eligibility criteria. The Council of Europe's 2018 report on *Family Reunification for Refugee and Migrant Children* further emphasized that administrative delays and documentary barriers continued to impede timely reunification, particularly for families from conflict-affected regions.

In parallel, bilateral and multilateral attempts to harmonize case management systems for children on migratory routes have emerged in regions such as East and Southern Africa, where countries including Algeria, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Malawi, and Zimbabwe have implemented child-specific screening systems and training for government officials. These efforts, while promising, have been constrained by resource limitations, weak institutional capacity, and the absence of standardized cross-border referral mechanisms.

At the national level, several countries have enacted legislative and policy reforms aimed at reducing or eliminating the separation of children from their parents during immigration enforcement. Canada adopted a Ministerial Directive in the early 2020s to "keep children, both unaccompanied and accompanied by their families, out of detention to the greatest extent possible and to maintain family unity," reflecting a rights-based approach that prioritizes community placement and family-based alternatives to detention. Colombia established a temporary protection program in 2021 that allowed Venezuelan migrants to apply for regular status, work permits, and access to basic services, thereby reducing the likelihood of family separation due to irregular status.

In the United States, the 2018 "zero tolerance" policy and its subsequent reversal through court-ordered reunification efforts under *Ms. L v. ICE* became a focal point for both domestic

and international scrutiny. The establishment of the Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families in 2021 marked a significant institutional response, with the Task Force identifying thousands of separated children and facilitating hundreds of reunifications by 2026. However, advocacy groups and oversight bodies have continued to report that family separations persist under new enforcement practices, including interior arrests and expedited removals, underscoring the limitations of reactive measures in the absence of comprehensive legislative reform.

A growing number of countries have sought to prevent family separation by implementing alternatives to immigration detention and strengthening child protection systems. UNICEF's 2023 advocacy brief on ending child immigration detention highlighted promising practices in countries that have adopted legislative prohibitions on the detention of children based on migration status, created temporary regularization programs, and invested in inclusive child protection systems with comprehensive case management. Examples include community-based care models in Mexico, family-based alternative care in Costa Rica, and case management systems in parts of Europe that prioritize the best interests of the child in all migration-related decisions.

Despite these advances, significant gaps remain. In Australia, longstanding policies of mandatory immigration detention and offshore processing have resulted in de facto family separations, prompting incremental reforms in the late 2010s to expand community placement options for families with children, though critics argue that these measures have been insufficient to fully address the human rights concerns. In the EU, while the Family Reunification Directive has facilitated reunification for many families, restrictive national implementations and procedural barriers continue to impede access for vulnerable groups, including low-income migrants and those with irregular status.

The outcomes of these international and national initiatives have been mixed, reflecting both the complexity of migration governance and the structural constraints that states face in implementing rights-based policies. At the international level, norm-setting efforts have been highly successful in establishing a robust legal and policy framework that recognizes family unity as a fundamental right and a practical imperative for effective migration management. However, the translation of these norms into consistent practice has been uneven, with significant disparities across regions and jurisdictions.

At the national level, countries that have adopted comprehensive legislative reforms, invested in child protection systems, and prioritized community-based alternatives to detention have generally achieved better outcomes in preventing family separation and facilitating reunification. Conversely, enforcement-driven approaches that prioritize border control over human rights have tended to exacerbate the risk of separation, as evidenced by the U.S. “zero tolerance” episode and Australia’s offshore processing policies.

Key lessons from these experiences include the importance of early intervention through family tracing and best interests assessments, the need for cross-border cooperation and standardized referral mechanisms, and the critical role of civil society and legal advocacy in holding states accountable to their international obligations. Moving forward, the integration of family unity principles into national migration strategies, the expansion of safe and regular pathways for families to move together, and the strengthening of child protection systems will be essential to preventing future separations and ensuring that the right to family life is meaningfully realized for all migrant and refugee children.

VI. **Possible solutions**

In response to the persistent challenges of family separation during immigration enforcement, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental agencies, and civil society coalitions have developed a comprehensive set of proposals aimed at preventing separations, facilitating reunification, and ensuring long-term protection for migrant and refugee children. These recommendations, grounded in international human rights law and informed by field experience, span legislative reforms, operational improvements, cross-border cooperation mechanisms, and systemic investments in child protection infrastructure.

A central recommendation advanced by UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, and the Global Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children is the adoption of explicit legislative prohibitions on the detention of children based on their or their parents' migration status. These organizations argue that child detention is inherently harmful, violates the CRC's best interests principle, and is never justified as a migration management tool. Proposed legislative models include statutory bans on child detention, mandatory time limits for any exceptional administrative holding, and judicial oversight requirements for all immigration-related

custody decisions involving minors. Countries such as Mexico, Costa Rica, and several EU Member States have been cited as positive examples where such prohibitions have been enacted and implemented, resulting in measurable reductions in family separation and improved child welfare outcomes.

UNHCR, the International Rescue Committee, and the Council of Europe's Expert Group on Family Reunification have consistently called for the expansion of accessible and affordable family reunification pathways, particularly for refugees, asylum seekers, and vulnerable migrants. Key proposals include the elimination or reduction of income thresholds, waiting periods, and documentary requirements that disproportionately exclude low-income families; the extension of eligibility criteria to include extended family members and caregivers in contexts where parents are deceased or unavailable; and the establishment of priority processing for applications involving unaccompanied or separated children. In the EU context, NGOs have urged Member States to fully implement the Family Reunification Directive's humanitarian provisions and to align national laws with evolving case law from the Court of Justice of the European Union.

Advocacy groups have also promoted the creation or expansion of temporary and permanent regularization programs that provide migrant families with secure legal status, thereby reducing the risk of separation due to enforcement actions. UNICEF's 2023 advocacy brief highlighted Colombia's 2021 Temporary Protection Program for Venezuelan migrants as a model that enabled families to access work permits, health care, education, and social services without fear of deportation. Similar proposals have been advanced for the United States, including calls for legislative pathways to citizenship for long-term undocumented residents and for the restoration of humanitarian protections for asylum-seeking families.

A widely endorsed operational recommendation is the institutionalization of mandatory best interests assessments (BIAs) and child-sensitive interview procedures for all migrant and refugee children, whether accompanied or unaccompanied. UNHCR, UNICEF, and Terre des Hommes have developed guidance on conducting BIAs in migration contexts, emphasizing the need for trained child protection professionals, interpreters, and cultural mediators to ensure that children's views are heard and that decisions prioritize family unity unless separation is demonstrably in the child's best interests. Proposed procedural safeguards include the appointment of independent guardians for unaccompanied children, the

prohibition of best interests determinations by immigration enforcement officials, and the integration of BIAs into all stages of asylum, resettlement, and return processes.

NGOs have strongly advocated for the development and scaling of community-based alternatives to immigration detention for families with children, including supervised release, case management, and family-based foster care arrangements. These models, which have been successfully implemented in countries such as Canada, Belgium, and parts of Latin America, prioritize the placement of children and their caregivers in supportive community settings where they can access education, health care, and legal assistance while their immigration cases are resolved. Key recommendations include the establishment of national registries of vetted community sponsors, the provision of financial and social support to host families, and the development of monitoring mechanisms to ensure that alternatives are genuinely protective and not merely a form of unsupervised release.

For children who have already been separated from their families, NGOs and international organizations have emphasized the urgent need for strengthened family tracing and reunification mechanisms. UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have called for the establishment of dedicated national units responsible for cross-border family tracing, supported by interoperable databases and standardized referral protocols. Proposals include the creation of centralized registries of separated children, the use of biometric data and secure communication channels to facilitate identity verification, and the provision of legal and logistical support to parents seeking reunification, including assistance with travel documentation and visa applications.

Regional bodies and transnational advocacy networks have stressed the importance of harmonizing child protection systems across borders to ensure continuity of care and prevent gaps that could lead to separation. In East and Southern Africa, for example, UNICEF and partner organizations have supported the development of child-specific screening systems and the training of government officials to identify and respond to the needs of separated children on migratory routes. Similar initiatives have been proposed for Europe, including the establishment of regional case management protocols, mutual recognition of guardianship appointments, and joint training programs for border and child protection officials.

To address the root causes of irregular migration and family separation, NGOs have called for the expansion of safe and regular pathways that enable families to move together without resorting to dangerous journeys or smuggling networks. Proposed measures include the scaling up of humanitarian admission programs, the creation of family-based resettlement quotas, the facilitation of labor mobility schemes that allow for family accompaniment, and the establishment of emergency visas for families fleeing conflict or persecution. The GCM Family Unity Initiative has specifically highlighted the potential of complementary pathways—such as student visas, family reunification visas, and humanitarian corridors—to reduce the need for irregular migration and to uphold the right to family life.

A recurring theme in NGO recommendations is the need for sustained investment in national child protection systems that are inclusive of migrant and refugee children. UNICEF's 2023 brief on ending child immigration detention outlined a comprehensive framework for building such systems, including the development of legislative frameworks that prohibit child detention, the establishment of specialized child protection units within migration and asylum authorities, and the allocation of adequate resources for case management, psychosocial support, and legal assistance. Proposed capacity-building measures include the training of border officials, judges, and social workers on child rights and migration, the integration of child protection indicators into national migration monitoring systems, and the establishment of independent oversight bodies to review immigration-related decisions affecting children.

Finally, NGOs have emphasized the critical role of data collection, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms in ensuring that policy commitments translate into concrete outcomes. Recommendations include the systematic collection of disaggregated data on separated children, the publication of annual reports on family reunification outcomes, and the establishment of independent review bodies to investigate allegations of rights violations. In the United States, advocacy groups have called for the creation of a permanent ombudsperson for separated families, empowered to conduct investigations, issue subpoenas, and recommend remedial actions. At the international level, NGOs have urged states to incorporate family unity indicators into their reporting under the CRC and the GCM, and to subject their policies to regular peer review and civil society scrutiny.

The solutions proposed by NGOs and international organizations reflect a comprehensive, rights-based approach to preventing and remedying the separation of children from their

parents during immigration enforcement. These recommendations span legislative reforms, operational improvements, cross-border cooperation mechanisms, and systemic investments in child protection infrastructure, all grounded in the principle that family unity is both a fundamental human right and a practical imperative for effective migration governance. While the implementation of these proposals will require sustained political will, institutional capacity, and financial resources, the evidence from countries that have adopted similar measures suggests that meaningful progress is achievable. Moving forward, the integration of these recommendations into national migration strategies, the expansion of safe and regular pathways for families, and the strengthening of child protection systems will be essential to ensuring that the right to family life is meaningfully realized for all migrant and refugee children.

VII. How to prepare as a delegate

It is mandatory two write two, preferably three position papers. Furthermore, you are obligated to write at least one draft resolution. It would be very pleasant if you sent in your papers on time. You will find the Date in the delegate booklet or on the website. If you don't send any papers at all or severely late you will not be able to receive any awards regardless of your "performance" on the debate. As every year we will nominate the best and the most distinguished (second best) delegate as well as the best first timer. In order to enable us to have a fruitful debate please prepare yourself very well.

VIII. UN resolutions

https://docs.un.org/en/a/res/69/187
https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/74/133

IX. Useful links

https://www.refworld.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/20241211_family_reunification_guidelines_on_legal_standards_final_1.pdf

https://cep.asu.edu/sites/g/files/litvpz916/files/2023-03/preventing-fam-separation-detention-032323.pdf

X. Sources

https://www.unhcr.org/complementary-pathways-guidance/wp-content/uploads/sites/159/2024/12/Annex-10c-Talking-Points-on-Family-Reunification.pdf

https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/3386/file/Brief-1-Strengthening-child-protection-systems-and-ending-child-immigration-detention-EN.pdf

https://reliefweb.int/report/egypt/egypt-icrc-and-iom-collaborate-support-families-facing-separation-enar

https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/unicef-has-plan-keep-refugee-and-migrant-families-together

https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6173255/

https://www.unhcr.org/publications/note-family-reunification

https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6173255/

https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/report/family-separation-policy/

https://help.unhcr.org/centralasia/resettlement-and-complementary-pathways/complementary-pathways/family-reunification/

https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html

https://globalcompactrefugees.org/good-practices/rcrc-working-group-family-reunification-frwg

Best regards,

Julius Schmitt
(Co-Chair Committee on the Right of the Child)