**Universidade do Minho**
Escola de Economia e Gestão

Normandie Alexandra Freitas Moss

# Child Labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Cobalt Mines: The United Nations and the European Union as Providers of Human Security (2016-2022)

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# Child Labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Cobalt Mines: The United Nations and the European Union as Providers of Human Security (2016-2022)

Dissertação de Mestrado
Mestrado em Relações Internacionais

Trabalho efetuado sob a orientação da
**Professora Doutora Ana Paula Lima Pinto de Oliveira Almeida Brandão**

outubro de 2022

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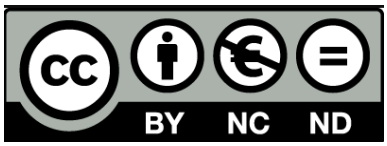


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**Acknowledgments**

My immense gratitude goes to my supervisor, Professor Ana Paula Brandão, for the unrelenting patience and insightful guidance, she provided throughout this journey.
Many thanks to the interviewees for their availability and for collaborating in this research.
Finally, I am grateful to my family and friends for their unconditional support.

I dedicate this dissertation to all children who are bound by the shackles of child labour.
In the words of Nearing:

*Gradually the flame of enthusiasm grows less bright, then it flickers hopelessly, and finally it goes out. The tale is told in the lack-luster eye, the harsh, indifferent voice, the languishing gait. The working child at first has no time to play; then he forgets to play, and finally he has no desire to play (Nearing 1911).*

There is no bigger pain than watching that flame fade. It is our duty to keep it lit.

## STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration.

I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Code of Ethical Conduct of the University of Minho.

University of Minho, October 2022

Full name: Normandie Alexandra Freitas Moss

**Resumo**

As mais recentes estimativas sugerem que, devido à pandemia de Covid-19, os índices de trabalho infantil aumentaram pela primeira vez em 20 anos, afetando atualmente 160 milhões de crianças mundialmente (ILO-UNICEF 2020). Nas minas de cobalto da República Democrática do Congo (RDC), o trabalho infantil tem vindo a ganhar cada vez mais destaque, principalmente com o aumento da procura pelo mineral. As crianças envolvidas na extração do cobalto laboram quase sempre na mineração artesanal, considerada uma das formas mais perigosas de trabalho infantil. O governo congolês tem-se revelado incapaz de resolver este problema, sendo por isso fundamental a colaboração com organizações notáveis, como as Nações Unidas (ONU) e a União Europeia (UE), reconhecidas internacionalmente como promotoras da segurança humana (SH).

Foi nesta conjuntura que surgiu a principal pergunta de investigação que orienta esta dissertação: De que forma é que a ONU e a UE, enquanto promotoras da SH, atuaram em relação ao trabalho infantil nas minas de cobalto da RDC, entre 2016 e 2022? Numa tentativa de responder a esta questão, a presente investigação procurou revelar os contributos propostos pela ONU e a UE, como fornecedores de SH, para reduzir o trabalho infantil na RDC; esclarecer a ligação inerente entre o trabalho infantil e o conceito de SH; assim como comparar as narrativas de ambos estes atores sobre a SH através de uma série de agendas diferentes, de modo a determinar a coerência dos seus discursos.

Os resultados sugerem que tanto a ONU como a UE exploraram – através de programas de prevenção do trabalho infantil, assim como iniciativas de reintegração de ex-vítimas de trabalho infantil - o seu verdadeiro potencial enquanto promotoras de SH no combate à prática na RDC. As conclusões retiradas através de análise temática, indicam que o trabalho infantil foi colocado no centro das narrativas da ONU e da UE como sendo uma ameaça direta à SH e, portanto, como impedimento à realização do seu objetivo final: assegurar os direitos e liberdades fundamentais de todas as pessoas, incluindo as crianças. Uma ambição igualmente refletida nas medidas que adotaram para reduzir a prática no país.

Contudo, o trabalho infantil continua a afetar milhões de crianças em todo o mundo. Uma dura realidade que não deve ser negligenciada. Embora não exista uma panaceia para o trabalho infantil, a investigação realizada sugere que, no caso da RDC, a prática deve ser reconhecida como uma ameaça direta à SH. Assim sendo, e para que sejam eficazes, quaisquer medidas contra o trabalho infantil devem dar prioridade à melhoria geral da situação de SH no país.

**Palavras-Chave:** Nações Unidas, República Democrática do Congo, Segurança Humana, Trabalho Infantil, União Europeia.

## Abstract

Recent estimates suggest that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, numbers on child labour have risen for the first time in 20 years, currently affecting 160 million children across the globe (ILO-UNICEF 2020). In the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) cobalt mines, child labour has become increasingly prominent, particularly as the demand for the material increases. Children involved in the extraction of cobalt work, primarily, in Artisanal Scale Mining (ASM), considered one of the most dangerous forms of child labour. The government's inability to revert the number of child miners, portends an urgency for the DRC to collaborate with prominent organisations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), both of which are internationally recognised as promoters of human security (HS).

It was against this backdrop that the main research question guiding this dissertation emerged: How have the UN and the EU, as promoters of HS, acted in regard to child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, between 2016 and 2022? In a bid to answer this question, the present research has sought to reveal the contributions proposed by the UN and the EU, as providers of HS, to reduce child labour in the DRC; shed light onto the inherent link between child labour and the concept of HS; as well as compare the narratives of both actors on HS across a range of different agendas, to determine the coherence within their discourses.

Findings suggest that both the UN and the EU have – through child labour prevention programmes, as well as initiatives to reintegrate former child labourers - harnessed their full potential as HS providers to counter the practice in the DRC. According to results obtained via thematic analysis, child labour has been placed at the core of UN and EU narratives as a direct threat to HS and, thus, as impediment to achieving their ultimate goal: ensuring the fundamental rights and freedoms of all people, including children. An ambition equally reflected in the measures they have adopted to reduce the practice in the country.

However, the harsh reality that child labour continues to affect millions across the globe should not be brushed aside. Although there is no panacea for child labour, this research suggests that, in the case of the DRC, the practice must be recognised as a direct threat to HS. As such, effective measures against child labour must prioritise the overall improvement of HS in this country.

**Keywords:** Child Labour, Democratic Republic of Congo, European Union, Human Security, United Nations.

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**List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

| | |
|---|---|
| **ACCEL Africa** | Accelerate Action for the Elimination of Child Labour in Africa |
| **ACP** | African-Caribbean-Pacific |
| **ASM** | Artisanal Scale Mining |
| **CDM** | Congo Dongfang Mining International |
| **CEDAW** | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| **CFSP** | Common Foreign and Security Policy |
| **CHS** | Commission on Human Security |
| **CIRAF** | Cobalt Industry Responsible Assessment Framework |
| **CLARITY Project** | Collective Action for Rights Realisation in Extractive Industry |
| **CLP** | Child Labour Platform |
| **COHOM** | Working Party on Human Rights |
| **COTECCO** | Combating Child Labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Cobalt Industry |
| **CRC** | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| **CSDP** | Common Security and Defence Policy |
| **DDR** | Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration |
| **DRC** | Democratic Republic of Congo |
| **ECC** | European Economic Community |
| **ECHR** | European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms |
| **ECHO** | European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office |
| **EGC** | *Entreprise Générale du Cobalt* |
| **EIDHR** | European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy |
| **EITI** | Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative |
| **ESDP** | European Security and Defence Policy |
| **ESS** | European Security Strategy |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **EurAC** | European Network on Central Africa |
| **FAO** | Food and Agriculture Organisation |
| **FRA** | European Agency for Fundamental Rights |

| | |
|---|---|
| **GSP** | Generalised Scheme of Preferences |
| **HR** | Human Rights |
| **HS** | Human Security |
| **HSU** | Human Security Unit |
| **ICCPR** | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights |
| **ICERD** | International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination |
| **ICESCR** | International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights |
| **ILO** | International Labour Organisation |
| **IOE** | International Organisation of Employers |
| **IPEC** | International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour |
| **IPIS** | International Peace Information Service |
| **ITC** | International Training Centre |
| **ITSCI** | International Tin Supply Chain Initiative |
| **ITUC** | International Trade Union Confederation |
| **LSM** | Large Scale Mining |
| **MAP 16** | Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement to Accelerate Action against Child Labour and Forced Labour |
| **MONUSCO** | United Nations Organization Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| **NATO** | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation |
| **NCCL** | National Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour |
| **NGO** | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| **OECD** | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| **OPCAT** | Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment |
| **R2P** | Responsibility to Protect |
| **SAP/FP** | Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour |
| **SDG** | Sustainable Development Goal |
| **SGHS** | Study Group on Human Security |
| **TEU** | Treaty of the European Union |
| **TSD** | Trade and Sustainable Development |

| | |
|---|---|
| **UDHR** | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| **UEPN-DDR** | The DRC's Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration Commission |
| **UN** | United Nations |
| **UNCHR** | United Nations Commission on Human Rights |
| **UNDP** | United Nations Development Programme |
| **UNECOSOC** | United Nations Economic and Social Council |
| **UNESCO** | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| **UNFPA** | United Nations Population Fund |
| **UNGC** | United Nations Global Compact |
| **UNICEF** | United Nations Children's Fund |
| **UNOPS** | United Nations Office for Project Services |
| **UNTFHS** | United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security |
| **USSR** | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| **ZEA** | Zone d'Exploitation Artisanale |

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# INTRODUCTION

Recent estimates suggest that, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, numbers on child labour have risen for the first time in 20 years, currently affecting 160 million children across the globe (ILO-UNICEF 2020). These staggering figures have left humanitarian organisations worldwide at a loss and spurred an international crusade to eradicate the scourge of child labour.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) cobalt mines, child labour has become increasingly prominent, particularly as the demand for the material increases. The mineral's magnetic properties and ability to withstand intense temperatures and conditions make it an indispensable component to the manufacture of lithium batteries applied in electric cars, computers and mobile phones.

Children working in mines are exposed to undignified working conditions, which harm their physical and mental health, breach their rights and violate their dignity. This modern form of slavery denies children an education, impairs their development and undermines the stability of a modern economy.

For years, international actors, such as the United Nations (UN), and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), such as Human Rights Watch, have documented serious human rights violations in mining operations, particularly in artisanal mines in the DRC[1]. However, child labour in Artisanal Scale Mining (ASM) continues to evolve.

## Delimitation and Research Questions

The causes of child labour are deeply interconnected with the rise of artisanal mining, which became a source of livelihood for many, when the DRC's largest state-owned mining company collapsed in the 1990s. Dependency on cobalt mining further intensified during the Second Congo War (1998-2003), when, as a result of the government's inability to revive the industrial sector, ex-president Laurent Kabila enabled the independent excavation of vast mineral riches (Amnesty International 2016).

In 2002, the government published a new mining code (DRC 2002) in attempts to revitalise the sector and attract foreign investment. This code stipulated that artisanal mining was to only take place within *Zones d'exploitation artisanale* (Artisanal Mining Zones or ZEAs), in which Large Scale Mining (LSM) was not viable. As a result, many artisanal miners were driven out of mining sites that were sold to large

[1] Human Rights Watch 2009; US Department of State 2020; OHCHR 2010 & 2016; UN General Assembly 2019; World Vision 2009 & 2012.

Western and Chinese companies. Seen as very few ZEAs were created in southern DRC, most artisanal miners in the region found themselves forced to work in unauthorised areas or encroach on land controlled by industrial mining companies. Inevitably, the gap between artisanal and industrial scale mining began to widen (Amnesty International 2016).

Today, the DRC is a member of numerous international and regional treaties, which require it to protect the rights of all people - including children - to work, to healthcare, to education and to an adequate standard of living. These treaties include, among others, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR 1989) and the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (ILO 1999). Despite the adoption of these documents, the phenomenon of child labour lingers, particularly, in the country's cobalt mines.

Children involved in the extraction of this mineral, work, primarily, in artisanal mines, in which there is little supervision and exposure to degrading working conditions is high. Considered one of the most dangerous forms of child labour, ASM poses a threat to children's physical integrity by forcing them to work strenuously, often in unstable underground structures where they are exposed to dust and toxic chemicals (Amnesty International 2016).

In light of this, the Congolese government has been heavily criticised by UN human rights monitoring bodies and others[2] for violating its international obligations, for its failure to create an adequate labour inspection system to remove children from labour, and for its lack of commitment to ensure the preservation of the rights advocated in the abovementioned treaties.

One should note, however, that despite its mineral wealth, the DRC is one of the poorest countries worldwide having suffered from decades of war, disease, corruption and poor governance[3]. As such, one of the primary reasons for the persistence of child labour in the country is poverty, as most households depend on mining as their main source of income. Additionally, due to a deficiency in financial and human resources, authorities in the DRC lack the means to carry out checks and prosecute offenders, who profit from child labour (US DOL 2019).

In essence, the total elimination of child labour in mines is a very complex issue, as mining larger quantities of cobalt would involve more children and women, more accidents, greater reliance on mining as a source of revenue, and greater devastation of local ecosystems. However, fewer quantities would

[2] Human Rights Watch 2009; US Department of State 2020; OHCHR 2010 & 2016; UN General Assembly 2019; UN Joint Human Rights Office OHCHR-MONUSCO 2020a; World Vision 2009 & 2012.
[3] Knoema 2020; IEP 2021; UNDP 2020; Transparency International 2021; Resource Watch 2019.

exacerbate unemployment and drastically reduce State income, spilling over into communities already scarred by decades of chronic poverty, corruption, war and conflict (Sovacool 2019).

Therefore, mining will continue to be vital to these families' survival, particularly as the demand for cobalt intensifies (IPIS 2020). Per consequence, any attempt to reform livelihoods or manage practices will alter the power dynamics of the country and, potentially, contribute to unsustainability or inequality (Sovacool 2019).

The government's inability to prevent and revert the number of child labourers involved in mining sites, clearly indicates an urgency for the DRC to collaborate with prominent international organisations, such as the UN and the European Union (EU), both of which are indispensable actors in the maintenance of global peace and stability, and internationally recognised as promoters of human security (HS).

This critical approach can be defined by its broad versus narrow sense. Within its broader definition, HS recommends the provision of strategic needs, such as education, to preserve long-term development, whereby its narrow definition advocates for the provision of security in the form of protection from wars, for instance (Alkire 2003; Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014; Bosold, and Werthes 2005; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

Thus, for the purpose of this research, the broad notion of HS will be contemplated, as it embraces the dimension of development, consistent with the phenomenon under analysis. Keeping in mind the complex character of child labour, it is essential to consider the underlying roots of social, economic and political threats in the DRC, in order to devise strategies that translate the objective of countering the issue into practical action. Therefore, HS, as a theoretical framework, seems the most apt in providing a comprehensive analytical framework, which can address a wide variety of risks inherent to child labour.

Having considered all of the above, this dissertation will focus on the comparison of the UN and the EU, as promoters of HS, in combating child labour, with reference to the DRC as case study, between 2016 and 2022.

After years of minimal improvement of the general child labour situation in the DRC, in 2016, the Congolese government made significant advancements in the eradication of the practice (US DOL 2016), including the adoption of a new age verification procedure, to reduce the risk of child recruitment by the country's national armed forces (EEAS 2017b). This is indicative of a push towards the reduction of the practice and a positive premise for international cooperation with actors, such as the UN and the EU.

Additionally, estimates suggest that global progress against child labour stagnated in 2016, so that by 2020 - due to the humanitarian crisis provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic - numbers had

drastically increased, particularly in Central Africa (ILO 2017b). As such, the year of 2016 marks a turning point in the situation of child labour globally, thus incentivising greater cooperation and a renewed commitment to the elimination of the practice.

This commitment was intensified in 2022, when the V Global Conference on Child Labour was held in Durban, in South Africa. The event gathered relevant stakeholders from around the globe, in an effort to accelerate progress on the elimination of child labour and, ultimately, led to the adoption of the "Durban Call for Action", a critical step forward in the reduction of the phenomenon worldwide. The analysis, therefore, lies in this timeframe informed by these two key events.

That being said, this dissertation aims to address the main research question: How have the UN and the EU, as promoters of HS, acted in regard to child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, between 2016 and 2022? In order to reveal the contributions proposed by both actors in favour of vulnerable groups - in which children in the DRC are included - offer insight to their discourses on HS, as well as establish a link between the latter and the issue of child labour, the three following secondary questions emerged: How does child labour in the DRC pose a threat to HS? Which measures have been adopted by the UN and the EU to combat child labour in the DRC between 2016 and 2022? How is the concern for HS framed within the narratives of the UN and the EU between 2016 and 2022?

## Theme Purpose

The several reasons for the choice of this theme are justified by the interest in conducting research on the subjects of HS, child protection, child rights as well as their violations, all of which have become issues of increasing prominence in the international sphere and the political agenda of international organisations alike.

The phenomenon of child labour is particularly relevant, as its reality is not only applicable to the case of the DRC, but exceeds geographical, social and economic borders, thus constituting a transnational concern. Despite the international recognition of child labour as a serious violation of human rights, and regardless of the numerous measures adopted to address it, this form of exploitation continues to affect millions of children worldwide.

Irrespective of the ILO's statement regarding a decline in the incidence of child labour by almost 40% between the years 2000 and 2016 (ILO 2021f), the UN agency fears that the current Covid-19 pandemic could reverse years of gains, particularly because in recent years, there has been a setback among children aged 5 to 11 years old, across several geographical areas (ILO 2021f).

In the case of child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, the dependency of countless families on mining, as their main source of income, poses an obstacle to international actors, such as the UN and the EU, obstructing their role as promoters of HS. Albeit several measures adopted by the DRC's government to tackle child labour, efforts remain disproportionate in respect to the severity of the issue.

In addition to fueling conflict, reliance on a type of work rooted in inhumane conditions weakens the country's economic development. The complex character of child labour prevents its combat and efficient prevention, hence the urgency to create better laws and regulation to protect vulnerable children. If greater advances in the prevention of child labour in the DRC are to be made, stronger cooperation will be needed among local and international partners, including those extracting and exporting cobalt.

Different types of human insecurities, such as child labour and poverty, are highly interconnected. Therefore, coherent and integrated approaches are vital for their efficient mitigation. By avoiding restrictive views, the HS framework contributes a more in-depth understanding of challenges facing the 21st century and is, therefore, apt to provide such integrated approaches (UNDP 2016). As such, the HS approach can provide a multidimensional analytical framework, which is well-equipped to address the root causes of security threats and can assist the UN and the EU in developing appropriate responses to them (Majumdar 2001; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

The choice of the UN and the EU as elements to be analysed in the comparative study emanates from the fact that they both have been, since their foundation, promoters of rights and values considered crucial to the protection of HS. Therefore, they are comparable on the one axis, but distinct in several other aspects, thus contributing to a more profound comparison.

One of the most evident differences between the two is their organisational nature. The UN is based on an intergovernmental system, while the EU relies on a supranational structure, with a political system capable of formulating and implementing public policies. In terms of external reach, the UN is a universal organisation, whereas the EU is regional.

Additionally, the timing of their engagement with the HS approach marks another distinction between the two. The UN is considered to have been the first to adopt the approach in the context of its 1994 Development Programme (UNDP 1994) in a more intimate manner, whereby the EU only later, with reference to the Barcelona Report (AA.VV. 2004), acknowledged HS less explicitly.

While the UN has adopted a resolution (66/290) defining HS (UN General Assembly 2012), the EU has never formally embraced the concept. The Union's mere structure, as an amalgamation of States each with their own agendas and interests, has obstructed the full acceptance of the paradigm (Kotsopoulus 2006). These intricacies have added an additional "layer" to the study.

## State of the Art

Over 70% of the world's cobalt supply stems from the DRC, where, between 15% to 30% of the material is produced in ASM (Baumann-Pauly 2020). Throughout the years, there have been numerous reports (Nordbrand, and Bolme 2007; Scheele, Haan, and Kiezebrink 2016) on human rights abuses, as well as social, health and environmental impacts associated with the mining sector in the Eastern Region of the country, known as the "copperbelt" area.

Backed by an Öko-Institut study (Tsurukawa, Prakash, and Manhart 2011), in 2016, NGO Amnesty International brought the topics of gender-based violence and child labour in the DRC's artisanal mining sites to the general public's attention (Amnesty International 2016). A year later, the organisation published an additional report, evaluating corporate action to confront these issues (Amnesty International 2017).

Notorious for the illegal presence of armed groups spurred by severe corruption, ASM is known to house the highest incidence of child labour in the DRC (BGR 2019; Mancini *et al.* 2020; OECD 2019). According to the latest numbers produced by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), around 40 000 children are involved in artisanal mining across the country (Amnesty International 2016). Many of these children are as young as seven years old and work excruciatingly long hours searching for cobalt-bearing rocks in the discarded by-products of mines, washing and separating the ore in lakes and rivers before selling it (Amnesty International 2016).

In this sector, health issues provoked by a high exposure to toxic substances have been observed in the local population, particularly in children (Banza *et al.* 2009, 2018; Cheyns *et al.* 2014). Some studies have even detected erectile dysfunction (Musa Obadia *et al.* 2020) and birth defects (Van Brusselen *et al.* 2020) associated with metal exposure in mining regions. Elenge, Leveque, and De Brouwer (2013) explored the vulnerability of working conditions in artisanal mines and reported an elevated incidence of accidents linked to occupational hazards. Additionally, studies have confirmed the high occurrence of sexual violence against women living in close proximity to artisanal mining sites (Perks 2011; Rustad, Østby, and Nordås 2016).

Cast in a slightly different light, some studies have verified the positive influence of ASM on the economic wellbeing and livelihood of locals, as well as its role in sustainable development (Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra 2017; Sovacool 2019; Zvarivadza 2018). Bearing in mind, that the sector represents one of the main forms of subsistence for millions of Congolese citizens (de Brier, and Jorns 2020), its reduction could have detrimental effects on the population and potentially increase the prevalence of child labour (Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra 2017).

There is a significant amount of academic literature devoted to the importance of corporate due diligence, transparency and sustainability in the mining sector (Eslava 2018; Mancini *et al.* 2020, 2021; OECD 2019). Studies, such as that of Cuvelier (2017), determine the effects of legislative initiatives on conflict minerals, such as the EU Regulation on Conflict Minerals (European Union 2017), for instance. Reports produced by the European Network on Central Africa (EurAC), point towards the positive impacts of this regulation and its accompanying measures, bearing in mind any flaws. By highlighting the significance of ASM for the economic survival of the local population, these reports emphasise the need for its support, formalisation and regulation, rather than total elimination (EurAc 2017; EurAc *et al.* 2019).

Others, such as Mària and Miho (2012), focus on artisanal miners' well-being in the DRC, by observing the ways in which corporate social responsibility in mining companies can promote the human rights of these workers. Callaway (2018) analyses the perspectives of Congolese cobalt miners from both the artisanal and industrial mining sectors, civil society activists, as well as local government representatives, in order to develop a set of recommendations for end-user companies and other key partners.

When it comes to the practice of child labour, there is a substantial volume of scientific production, predominantly, in the fields of law (Metsing 2020; Obi 2014; Matos 2015), economics (Abdelfattah 2015; Coulombe 2000; Galli 2001), social work (Ullén and Eck 2011), and sociology (Murrieta 2014), to name a few. There has also been extensive research on child labour in the case of artisanal mining in sub-Saharan Africa (Gatsinzi, 2019; Hilson 2008, 2009, 2011; Hilson, and Maconachie 2020; Rozani 2022).

Kamwimbi (2013), for instance, analyses child labour in the DRC from a legal perspective by investigating the country's legal system and its laws prohibiting the crime. Cheruga, Liron, and Canavera (2020) explore children's involvement in ASM in the DRC and examine community-based social protection mechanisms to alleviate the harms they are exposed to, from an economic, social, but also spiritual standpoint. Similarly, André and Godin (2013) carried out a socio-anthropological collective research project on child miners in the DRC, in attempts to further examine the issue.

However, in the field of International Relations, there are very few studies on the general subject of child labour (Church 2002; López-Calva 2001; Murshed 2001), and none on the case of child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines. Similarly, there is close to no academic research contemplating the application of HS, as a theoretical framework, to the phenomenon of child labour.

Majumdar (2001) is one of the few academics to consider this approach. The author argues for the need to move away from the purely economic stance, often applied to the study of child labour, to

consider the practice as an issue of HS and development. In observing the phenomenon from the perspective of HS, Majumdar underlines the importance of expanding the definition of child labour to include the idea that such work is not only disruptive to children's rights and needs in the short-term, but, most importantly, that it affects them in the long-term by impeding their all-round development (Majumdar 2001).

The concept of "human security" itself arose in the international arena after the Cold War, when the conventional notion of security began to comprise the ideal of human safety. The first non-academic effort to conceptualise HS was the UNDP Report from 1994 (UNDP 1994), in which it is described as a means to protect fundamental freedoms, human rights and national security. As such, the emergence of the humancentric perspective unleashed the recalibration of the traditional state-centric approach focused on territorial or military security, to one that revolves around the safety of individuals and their communities, emphasising the need to guarantee human rights, which are not restricted to national borders (Bosold, and Werthes 2005; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

While granting higher importance to individuals' rights, the concept does not devaluate the security of States. In fact, the two are mutually reinforcing, for a secure State is not a precondition for a secure citizen. Therefore, issues such as poverty and human rights are included into the Security Studies agenda, extending the preconceived notions of safety and establishing the needs and rights of individuals, including their well-being and dignity, as new goals to be achieved (Bosold, and Werthes 2005; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

Despite the lack of a consensual definition, HS is unanimously understood to consist of a broad and a narrow approach. In its broadest sense (freedom from want), HS proposes the provision of strategic needs, such as access to education and jobs, as catalysts to achieving long-term development, whereas its narrow sense (freedom from fear) focuses on the need for protection from tangible threats, such as wars, persecution, or physical harassment (Bosold, and Werthes 2005; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

The importance of working on both "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" simultaneously is reiterated in the fact that the majority of today's security challenges are caused by a number of interrelated threats. These can assume multiple forms, ranging from economic insecurity, political conflicts, or environmental degradation, for instance. In that sense, different types of insecurities are interlinked, by what is termed the "domino effect", making them global, rather than local or national (Alkire 2003; Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014; Bosold, and Werthes 2005; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

Therefore, the HS framework provides a holistic and inclusive approach to child labour, as it allows for a broader, more comprehensive perspective on a variety of multifaceted challenges, thus enabling a more profound analysis of the matter.

As previously stated, there is insufficient research on the practice of child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, and on the action of international agencies, such as the UN and the EU, in combating the phenomenon, particularly from the viewpoint of HS. That being said, this dissertation addresses a knowledge gap in the literature, by comparing both these organisations in their efforts to address child labour in the DRC, while offering insight onto their narratives on HS.

By reinforcing the inherent link between child labour and HS, this study suggests that appropriate measures to counter the issue must be centred around the principles of HS. As such, child labour must be acknowledged as a direct threat to HS and, accordingly, action to prevent the issue must focus on improving the general HS of a given country. This realisation may spur future research on the efficiency of practical measures adopted by the UN and the EU regarding a wide range of phenomena, and thus support policy makers in their decisions.

In addition, the results established that the narratives of the UN and the EU are in line with the concept of HS in its broadest sense. As such, this dissertation may serve as basis for future comparative analyses on the action of these organisations, to assess the extent to which the concern for HS, as promoted within their discourses, is reflected within their overall performance, thus determining their credibility as international HS providers.

## Methodology

"Methodology concerns the way in which knowledge about the world is acquired." (Landman 2000, 17). As such, it is a pivotal aspect of research and fundamental in identifying the methods and techniques adopted by the project (Quivy and Campenhoudt 1992). Seen as tools that unify science, methods can be applied to the investigation of virtually any topic.

The particular method employed in this dissertation is qualitative research, which encompasses a wide range of approaches which do not rely on a numerical dimension. Qualitative methods are, primarily, concerned with identifying the traits and characteristics of the object of study, as well as making descriptive and causal inferences about the world (King, O. Keohane, and Verba 1994; Landman 2000).

This study relies on an interpretivist epistemological stance, oriented towards a contextualised (how) understanding of the subject. Epistemology, also known as the "theory of knowledge", reflects a

researcher's view of what can be known about the social world, how it can be known, and what the limits of that knowledge are (Blaikie 2010).

In acquiring said knowledge two different methods can be implemented, i.e., induction or deduction (Blaikie 2010). In this case, the inductive logic seems the most appropriate as it involves a bottom-up approach in order to retrieve knowledge. As such, it searches for patterns and associations derived from observations of the world, which in turn provide the basis for the development of theories or laws. "Inference is the process of using the facts we know to learn about facts we do not know." (King, O. Keohane, and Verba 1994, 46). Accordingly, the facts we do not know are at the core of our research questions, while the ones we do know will be attained from qualitative data and observations made throughout the research.

As a means to collect this data, the descriptive case study has been applied as research design. In the words of Robert Yin (1994, 13) "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context." Case studies are especially convenient when statistical models are unprecise (George and Bennett 2004) and particularly useful when establishing descriptive inferences (Gerring 2004).

As qualitative research methods, case studies consist of intensively studying a single unit for the purpose of understanding a range of similar units, so as to better comprehend individual phenomena, organisational and political aspects of society (George and Bennett 2004). Albeit time-intensive and subject to mistakes, the case study seems to be the most adequate design for the study of child labour as a very complex and multilayered phenomenon in need of a comprehensive approach.

In addition, semi-structured interviews have been conducted[4], via the digital platform "Zoom", with the HR Focal Point of the EU Delegation in the DRC (20 July 2022) and Senior Programme Manager, Benafsha Charlick-Delgado, from the UN Global Compact (UNGC) Network UK (21 September 2022), both of which have extensive knowledge on the subject of child labour in the DRC. While unsuccessful, several other requests for potential interviews have been made, including members from the European Parliament and the European Commission, UNICEF, the ILO, the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), and several UN agencies, such as the UNDP, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).

In semi-structured interviewing a common set of topics or questions are prepared for each interview. One advantage of semi-structured interviews is their flexibility, allowing participants to answer questions in their own words and permitting space for follow-up questions (Matthews and Ross 2010;

[4] See Appendix 1 – Interview Guide.

Rubin 1995). This flexibility is particularly useful for attempting to understand certain measures taken by the UN and the EU to combat child labour.

Additionally, as opposed to other methods, such as surveys or structured interviews, semi-structured interviews enable the interviewer to ask for the clarification or rephrasing of certain concepts. Therefore, they entail much more detail and richness than the other techniques mentioned. However, high amounts of detail can easily become a disadvantage, as semi-structured interviews can be very time-consuming, and the amount of raw data collected hard to analyse (Matthews and Ross 2010; Rubin 1995).

In regard to the bibliography, both primary (official and first-hand data) and secondary (subjective literature) sources have been analysed. As primary sources, a wide range of official documents produced by the UN, the EU, the Congolese government, as well as a number of NGO's and other international entities were contemplated. These include EU conventions, European parliamentary questions, European Parliament resolutions, UN General Assembly resolutions, reports, strategies, proposals, Congolese legislation, both interviews conducted by the author, as well as official communications from both the UN and the EU, such as speeches and open declarations. Secondary sources analysed include, for instance, research, news, and opinion articles, theses and dissertations, books and book chapters by several different scholar, thus allowing a more subjective points of view.

Once the data was assembled, document analysis served as data processing technique, in order to evaluate primary and secondary sources. Another technique employed was qualitative content analysis, which assisted in evaluating the answers obtained from the interviews, as well as the content gathered by other means throughout the research. Qualitative content analysis is a selective screening technique, which enables the methodical and in-depth treatment of large quantities of complex information. By rigorously categorising qualitative material, a conceptual generalisation can be achieved (Schreier 2012).

In order to effectively analyse the discourses of the UN and the EU on HS across a range of different subjects, including child labour in the DRC, comparative thematic analysis[5] of their narratives has been conducted. Thematic analysis is a type of content analysis, commonly used to describe the meaning of textual data. In doing so, it allows the researcher to systematically sort large sets of qualitative material, by identifying patterns and themes. These themes form a coding frame, which is tailored to the material, so that it reflects the notions contained within the research questions, thus ensuring the validity and reliability of the results obtained (Schreier 2012; Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2014).

[5] See Chapter V, 5.1 Framework and Methods.

However, the reliability of findings can conflict with this particular method, as on the one hand, it grants the researcher a lot of flexibility in interpreting the data, while on the other hand, it is also very subjective. Nevertheless, academics contend that thematic analysis is the most useful qualitative research method to identify intricacies within textual data (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2014). In order to ensure the validity of results when evaluating the discourses of the UN and the EU, indicators of "comparability" have been established and applied to both organisations. This will enable the identification of similarities, as well as differences between their narratives, thus contributing to a more profound study.

According to Landman (2000), the four main reasons for comparison in Political Science are contextual description (allows the researcher to draw comparisons of the different cases being analysed), classification (helps make the world less complex), hypothesis-testing (promotes the construction of more general theories) and prediction (the outcome of comparison). The incremental and cumulative addition of knowledge, that comparative analysis can provide about the world, has made it one of the most appreciated research methods (Landman 2000).

In addition, the theoretical-conceptual framework, which will support this dissertation is that of HS. When dealing with the child as the referent object of security, as is the case with the present thesis, the humancentric approach seems the most appropriate. A theoretical framework not only helps guide the research but justify the research questions posed, as well as the results obtained. Thus, the framework of HS will provide the overarching structure for the analysis performed throughout this dissertation and establish the "lens" through which the phenomenon of child labour will be examined.

Furthermore, this dissertation will be driven by a hypothesis-free approach. As such, rather than seeking a response to a predetermined question, this type of approach allows the data and the intricate relationships contained within it to guide the answer, thus leaving more room for interpretation.

## Dissertation Outline

The main objectives of this dissertation are the following: to analyse the action of the UN and the EU as HS providers in child protection, specifically in child labour; compare their narratives on HS; discuss and operationalise the concepts of security and of human security; outline the relationship between the concepts of human security and child labour; identify the main causes and consequences inherent to this issue and contextualise the phenomenon within the DRC cobalt mining industry. This dissertation, will, thus, be based on a comparative study of both organisations, which will provide an overview of their action in combating the phenomenon and offer insight to their discourses on HS.

In order to accomplish the research goals, this dissertation has been sectioned into five main chapters. The first chapter - Human Security and Child Labour - will be dedicated to the theoretical and conceptual framework applied to this thesis, in which both the concepts of human security and child labour will be addressed in depth. From the evolution of the concept of human security itself, its origins, debates and critiques, to its operationalisation. Apart from defining the phenomenon of child labour, a link will be established between the latter and human security, so as to explore the significance of human security and human rights in the narrower context of child labour.

In Chapter II - Child Labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo - child labour will be discussed both in a broader context, encompassing the issue across the world and in a more restricted manner in the DRC. Within this setting, the evolution of the phenomenon, its causes, consequences and prevalence will be analysed. In addition, both the situation of the DRC's cobalt mines and the material's supply chains will be examined, in order to offer insight on the complex nature of cobalt mining from its extraction to its exportation. Furthermore, this chapter will address the following research question: How does child labour in the DRC pose a threat to HS?

Within the third chapter - The United Nations and the European Union as Promoters of Human Security - the evolution of both the UN and the EU in the promotion of human rights and HS will be considered, with the objective of delivering a more profound understanding of the main role and goals of these actors from their beginnings to their most recent involvement in HS related issues across the globe.

The fourth chapter - Combating Child Labour: United Nations and European Union Action. Band-Aid on a Bullet Wound? – will endeavour to portray a clear image of UN and EU efforts to eliminate the practice of child labour in the particular context of the DRC. While cognisant of the challenges posed by the immensity of the issue, this section includes potential solutions to sustainably root out child labour. In that sense, this chapter addresses the question: Which measures have been adopted by the UN and the EU to combat child labour in the DRC between 2016 and 2022?

Finally, Chapter V – Comparative Analysis of the United Nations and European Union Narratives on Human Security: Two Sides of the Same Coin– will strive to answer the following research question: How is the concern for HS framed within the narratives of the UN and the EU between 2016 and 2022? In doing so, comparative thematic analysis of the discourses of both the UN and the EU will be conducted on issues ranging from human rights and democracy to child labour and sustainable development, to determine the extent to which the human-centred concern has permeated the narratives of both organisations.

The results suggest that both the UN and the EU promote a discourse rooted in the principles of HS in its broadest sense, reinforcing their status as international providers of HS. Having fully embraced the notion of child labour as a direct threat to HS within their narratives, both actors have – through the development of child labour prevention programmes, as well as initiatives to reintegrate former child labourers - worked avidly to reduce the practice in the DRC's cobalt mines.

However, despite significant progress in advancing a global consciousness on the urgency of eliminating child labour, and the abundance of plans and strategies to accomplish that goal, one should not neglect the harsh truth that child labour continues to plague millions across the globe.

Although there is no cure-all solution to child labour, the research conducted indicates that, in the case of the DRC, the phenomenon must be acknowledged as direct threat to HS. In that regard, effective measures against child labour must place their focus on the overall improvement of HS in the country.

# CHAPTER I. HUMAN SECURITY AND CHILD LABOUR

In international politics, theory is an essential analytical tool for comprehending intricate phenomena. Therefore, the present chapter intends to depict the theoretical and conceptual framework, which will be applied throughout this dissertation.

In doing so, it discusses and operationalises the concept of HS and ascertains its relation to human rights and child labour. From the evolution of the concept of HS itself, its origins, debates and critiques, to defining the phenomenon of child labour, this section thoroughly addresses both concepts, so as to explore the utility of the HS framework within the narrower context of this case study.

## 1.1 Security: The Evolution of a Concept

Since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, States have embodied the most legitimate source of power in the international system. As the sole most important actors in this realm, the control and elimination of risks to their physical integrity and sovereignty became the highest priority on their agenda. Hence, the significance of the concept of security, still considered one of the structural pillars of International Relations today (Buzan 1991; Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014).

Security is known by most academics to be a "contested concept" in the field of Security Studies, seen as there is no consensus as of its meaning (Baldwin 1997; Buzan 1991; Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014; Haftendorn 1991; Wolfers 1952). Some have associated the term to "survival", the condition, in which measures are employed to manage threats to specific referent objects (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998), or as put by Williams (2008, 1) "the alleviation of threats to cherished values."

Throughout the years, the concept of security suffered numerous modifications, so as to acclimate to evolving realities and phenomena. Criticism of Security Studies dates to the 1960's, in which the theory of realism, as reigning paradigm, began to be heavily criticised for fostering a simplified view of reality and, ultimately, promoting a limited understanding of everyday politics (Caldweel, and Williams 2012).

During the Cold War period, most literature on the subject centered around the idea of national security, focused on military and nuclear threats. Critics in the 1970's condemned the intense narrowing of the field and began to highlight the role of interconnectedness, as well as the economic and environmental components of security (Brandão 2011). Throughout the 1980's and 1990's, theoretical

and methodological critiques continue to bloom and the rise of the "wide vs narrow" debate is sparked (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998).

As a result, many authors argue for the revitalisation and expansion of the concept to include a multi-sectorial character (Buzan 1991). In *Peace, Power and Security,* Buzan (1984) reasons for the inclusion of political, economic, societal, and ecological sectors into the conception of security, which he argues should be defined in broader international terms. His study contributes to the debate on whether States ought to start thinking in global rather than national terms, thus bridging the gap between national and international security.

However, the concept remained underdeveloped due to a number of normative and empirical concerns (Baldwin 1997), for, in addition to disputes concerning its real meaning, there seems to be no consensus on the referent subject of security or the manner, in which this core concept should be applied to a particular set of domains, be these of the military, economic, social or political kind.

The lack of scholarly attention given to security prior to the 80's was revendicated with the end of the Cold War. The intricate security environment of the 1990's prioritised a variety of multidimensional threats, such as terrorist attacks, weapon proliferation and global crime, all of which questioned the realist theory. Due to globalisation, challenges to security began to extend beyond national borders, compelling States to rethink their self-centered, national views and, subsequently, adapt to transnational phenomena (Brandão 2011).

In attempts to conceptualise and redefine security, the debate rapidly shifted its focus from the nature of threats, towards the providers and referent objects of security (Brandão 2011), making space for the individual human being, as well as facets of environmental security and social structures, such as the world economy (Buzan, and Hansen 2009). When expanding the scope of security to include non-military threats, various other correlated issues, such as humans, food, shelter and environment, arise. Ultimately, security is a "hyphenated concept" as it is always connected to a specific referent object, in the national or international realms and to one or several different sectors (Buzan, and Hansen 2009).

### 1.2 Human Security: Origins, Debates and Critiques

During the Cold War, the traditional sense of national security was primarily based on the protection of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States from external military threats, which emphasises the intrinsic relation between the concept of security and the theory of Realism, setting States as the primary subjects in the international arena (Buzan 1991). With the end of the bipolar power blocks

and the spread of globalisation, unexpected threats and insecurities arose, considerably changing the security environment.

This modern environment is challenged by crime, terrorism, disease, poverty and natural disasters, rather than military forces. The consequences of these threats often affect the security of groups of individuals rather than the security of States, rendering the state-centric paradigm unfit for the evolving security milieu. This is where the urge for a shift occurs, allowing the international community to reassess the definition of "security" within a vast political and academic debate (Spijkers 2007).

In attempts to divert national security from the tradition of war and territorial defence, the concept of Human Security (HS) became ever more distinguished in finding a response to major changes in the field of International Relations (Buzan, and Hansen 2009; Tadjabakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; Trachsler 2011). As a result, preconceived notions of security began to comprise the rights and needs of individuals and their communities, thus granting greater prominence to their well-being and dignity.

Despite this focal shift, HS does not undermine the role of States in the individual's protection, nor does it depreciate the security of States themselves, for both are mutually reinforcing. In fact, States continue to play an indispensable role in the welfare of their societies (Alkire 2003; Prezelj 2008; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

Although, the ideals of HS had been occasionally referenced in the past[6], the UN Human Development Report from 1994 (UNDP 1994) is known internationally to have been the first clear attempt at conceptualising the term outside of the academic field. Developed as an initiative to design a human development index, this was the first time the term was instrumentalised in the security narratives of governments, regional and international organisations alike (Brandão 2011; Christou 2014; Kotsopoulos 2006).

Despite significant efforts to define the concept, HS remains subject to several debates and critiques, as no consensus has been achieved among its advocates. Not only is there no clear definition on what HS truly means, there are too many definitions. From this wide array of conceptions arises the difficulty of which to prioritise (Tzifakis 2011).

Based on the UN Charter, the UNDP pronounces HS as a means to protect fundamental freedoms, human rights and national security (UNDP 1994). The report confirms a paradigm shift from a traditionally state-centered approach to security, to one preoccupied with countering threats such as hunger, disease and repression (Tzifakis 2011). Additionally, it emphasises the "protection from sudden

[6] The allocation of the individual to the centre of security concerns was first introduced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and in the Brandt Commission Report on Common Security (1981). For further details consult: Tadjbakhsh, Shahrbanou and Anuradha Chenoy. 2007. *Human Security: Concepts and Implications.* New York: Routledge.

and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of daily life - whether in homes, in jobs or in communities." (UNDP 1994, 22).

In "Human Security Now" from 2003, the Commission on Human Security (CHS), presents HS as a tool to:

> [...] protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment [...] It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations [...] creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity (CHS 2003, 4).

A narrower definition is presented by the Human Security Centre (2005), which depicts HS as "the protection of individuals and communities from war and other forms of violence." (HSC 2005). In opposition to this view, Ramesh Thakur, Vice Rector of the United Nations University, posits that:

> [...] [A]nything which degrades their [the individual's] quality of life – demographic pressures, diminished access to stock or resources, and so on – is a security threat. Conversely, anything which can upgrade their quality of life – economic growth, improved access to resources, social and political empowerment, and so on – is an enhancement of human security (Thakur 1997, 53-54).

According to the UNDP, the concept of security should be redefined to include the dimensions of human security and sustainable human development (UNDP 1994), as both are intrinsically correlated. On the one hand, sustainable human development allows for an environment, in which the emergence of conflict is less likely to occur, thus, promoting the implementation of HS. A lack in human development, on the other hand, inevitably leads to a number of consequences, such as poverty, hunger and disease, which in turn trigger conflict and violence (Lonergan, Gustavson, and Carter 2000; MacLean 2000, 270; Prezelj 2008). As a result, the HS concept becomes a precondition for human development, its "sustainability and continuation." (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007, 105).

Despite the characteristic polarity surrounding its definition, the axiomatic assumption of HS is that its main focus should be the individual ("security for whom?") (Owen, and Liotta 2006; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007). The theoretical framework is understood to comprise two distinct approaches focused on this core purpose: *freedom from fear* and *freedom from want*.

In its narrow sense, also known as "freedom from fear", which is associated to the dimension of security, HS argues for the right of the individual to protection from direct and indirect violence (i.e., war

and persecution) be it intended or not, and guarantees physical integrity, as well as access to basic needs (Owen, and Liotta 2006; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

HS in its broadest form, which is tied to development, adds "freedom from want" to the notion of "freedom from fear", therefore asserting the importance of providing strategic needs, such as access to education and jobs, as preconditions to attaining long-term development and quality of life (Alkire 2003; Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014; Bosold, and Werthes 2005; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; Trachsler 2011).

In this sense, protection is granted to the individual by ensuring that multidimensional sectors, such as the socio-economical one, are secured. In addition, the broad concept embraces a third component, known as "freedom from indignity", which assures the individuals' fundamental rights, enabling them to make their own choices and profit from a variety of opportunities in their everyday lives (Tadjabakhsh 2013).

In order to uphold HS, the UNDP predicts seven elements of security, which need to be taken into consideration. These are economic security, security from hunger, environmental security, security from disease, personal security, communitarian security and political security (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; Trachsler 2011; UNDP 1994). Additionally, it lists four characteristics inherent to the paradigm.

The first key principle of HS is universality, meaning that its purpose is the security of all people, wherever they may be. The second is interdependence among its components, for different types of security are interrelated and understood at different levels, may these be personal, local, regional or global. The third feature is related to HS strategies and how they must be context specific and preventive. Lastly, remains the fact that at the centre of this theory's attention is the individual human being (UNDP 1994).

In the last couple of decades, the approach of HS has continued to evolve in the realm of international politics. From its debut in the 1994 UN Development Report, HS was initially faced with skepticism during the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen (United Nations 1995), in which it was deemed a violation of State sovereignty. After having attracted world-wide attention, Canada and Japan were the first States to adopt HS as a foreign policy tool.

Between 2001 and 2003, the approach was once again brought to the centre of attention, this time in the debate on "responsibility to protect" (R2P) by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, supported by Canada, and also within the context of "responsibility for development" introduced by the CHS, supported by Japan (Tadjabakhsh 2013).

As a means to endorse the EU's peace-building character, in 2004, albeit never formally accepted, a proposition was made for the adoption of a Human Security Doctrine for Europe (AA.VV. 2004). In a report from the same year, "A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility" (United Nations 2004), the UN High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change recognised the holistic and interdependent nature of modern security threats. In his millennium report, "In Larger Freedom" (UN, General Assembly 2005a) from 2005, Kofi Annan adopted the three components of the broad notion of HS as guidelines, which led to the debate on how to further define HS, agreed upon by the General Assembly the same year (Tadjabakhsh 2013).

Throughout the years, HS got caught in a cacophony of academic and political debates ranging from its conceptualisation, its strong points and weaknesses to its practical applicability and political appropriateness[7]. As such, one of the main points of criticism regarding this paradigm revolves around the conceptual dichotomy (Oberleitner 2002; Owen 2004a) observed between its broad and narrow conceptions, but also the lack of consensus on whether to include or exclude certain threats from the practice ("security from what?"), how to prioritise issues in the context of the HS agenda, as well as the manner in which threats should be dealt with ("security by what means?") (Khong 2001; MacFarlane and Khong 2006).

In political terms, the narrow approach to HS advocates for humanitarian initiatives and policing methods to secure people from tangible violence, whereby the broad approach promotes engagement from the international community prior to the interventions (Glasius 2008; Liotta, and Owen 2006; Oberleitner 2002; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; Tzifakis 2011). The discrepancy sensed between these approaches stems mainly from the essence of threats.

The broad notion of HS, recognised and accepted by the UN and Japan, perceives natural disaster, poverty, hunger, environmental degradation or infectious diseases as threats to the individual (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; Trachsler 2011; Tzifakis 2011; UNDP 1994), interlinking HS with development and human rights with economic and social structures (Acharya 2004; Glasius 2008; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007), thus clearly moving away from the traditional understanding of security (Tzifakis 2011, 361).

Conversely, the narrow approach, mainly supported by Canada and encouraged by Andrew Mack (2005) in a Human Security Report, emphasises the need for protection from direct, physical threats, focusing majorly on individuals' physical integrity, fundamental rights and basic needs. Ultimately, these

[7] For a synopsis on the critiques and counter-critiques of HS, see Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy. 2007. Chapter 2, Box 2.2.

are acknowledged as traditional threats, which derive from violence, bringing the approach closer to security's orthodox form (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; Trachsler 2011).

Aside from its conceptual debate, HS is exposed to three further lines of criticism. The first contemplates its analytical value, the second concerns the operational applicability of the paradigm and the last critique pertains to its normative and political implications. One common theme among critics of the broad approach is the vagueness of the concept (Trachsler 2011). Paris (2001) captures this much criticised aspect in a paper entitled "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?". In the eyes of narrow conception theorists, broadening the definition of HS renders the theory analytically useless, preventing its academic and policy usefulness, as well as its successful operationalisation (Paris 2004; Trachsler 2011). Barry Buzan himself refers to HS as "a reductionist, idealist notion that adds no analytical value." (Buzan 2004, 369).

Critics attribute the "conceptual overstretch" of the concept to include several aspects, such as development and human rights, to the thinning of its utility in real world politics (MacFarlane, and Khong 2006; Mack 2002) claiming that the shift from State security to HS has brought many challenges onto the field of Security Studies and that reframing security in human terms has awoken a whole variety of difficulties (Liotta 2002, 486; MacFarlane, and Khong 2006, 228).

Similarly, authors such as Roznai (2014) and Tomuschat (2003) posit that coining new terms is redundant, for all security threats included in HS's wide conception can just as well be regarded as threats to international humanitarian law, stressing that instead of debating new concepts, it would be wiser to concentrate on the already existing and well theorised notion of rights. According to Owen (2004a), securitising all threats individuals deal with in their daily lives, inadvertently results in the inability to prioritise any of them.

Macfarlane and Khong (2006) and Krause (2004) refer to the extended version of the concept as a "shopping list", in which multiple items are tossed together in no particular order or category. As Krause (2004, 367) puts it, eventually the HS paradigm becomes a "loose synonym for 'bad things that can happen'." Advocates of the "freedom from fear" vision contend that by broadening security risks, the concept of security itself is starting to approach meaninglessness, whereas the concept of "national security" allegedly left no room for doubt. It was a simple term referring to the protection of a State against military assaults from another State (Spijkers 2007, 14).

However, criticism regarding HS's conceptual vagueness is one-sided, for the traditional concept of "State security" was not any less ambiguous, as there exists no clear definition for it (MacFarlane and Khong 2006, 12). Spijkers (2007, 15) proclaims that the "broadening of security has not created a new

dilemma in world politics, but it has actually forced an already existing dilemma to emerge out of the shadows."

Alkire (2003) refuses the allegation that the concept of security has been rendered vague by the broad standpoint and clarifies that as long as a "vital core" is recognised by institutions that apply HS, there can be no ambiguity. Moreover, the author claims that, due to its groundbreaking character, the broad conception of security is essential in an evolving security environment (Alkire 2003, 40). Likewise, Tadjabakhsh (2013) contends that at its core the paradigm is ethical, hence its purpose to avoid threats and minimise their impact when they occur. The author clarifies that HS must remain malleable, in order to address the root causes of insecurities, therefore it "should not be reduced to lists or to a narrow definition" (Tadjabakhsh 2013, 54).

In addition, in defence of the broad approach, Gasper (2004) critiques the narrow approach for its arbitrariness, seen as its focus centres purely around one type of threat, namely physical violence. In addition, broad supporters stress that it is precisely the holistic broadening of the concept that is responsible for the theory's innovative character, which allows for a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach (Acharya 2004).

With the intent to turn HS politically relevant and analytically useful, Owen (2004b) introduces the "threshold scheme". Anchored in the broad approach, this proposal considers all sources of threats, limiting them solely by severity rather than cause. Only those surpassing a certain level of severity ought to be considered threats to the human being. According to the author, ideally, narrow approach proponents should acknowledge that restricting their standpoint is counterproductive, whereas advocates of the broad approach should focus on hampering their perception on what truly constitutes a security threat. However, when relying on a threshold that focuses on a restricted number of threats that require immediate action, one might end up sacrificing strategic planning altogether (Owen 2004b).

In accordance with proponents of the broad approach, neither perceptible violence nor dignity-based threats can be addressed without critical appraisal and root cause analysis (Tadjabakhsh 2013, 48). Advocates of the narrow view contend that by labelling different kinds of issues as "security threats", not only will they receive greater political attention, but also a collective response, which was once reserved for military threats (Sheehan 2005). As a result, all sorts of different issues defended by "freedom from want" have been inserted into the security agenda, thus conveying them as a priority (Smith 2005).

In response, Tadjabakhsh (2013) asserts that acknowledging poverty and disease as legitimate threats to the individuals' daily lives and their dignity "is not an instrumental ploy to solicit action, but a

logical if not an ethnical exercise" (Tadjabakhsh 2013, 47). Cristina Muguruza (2017, 26) contends that prioritising HS threats is the wrong approach to HS as a human focused theory, and that instead of choosing among contending ambitions, policy makers ought to prioritise "the identification of thresholds of survival, livelihood and dignity [...]", for HS is "[...] human-focused rather than threat-focused." (Muguruza 2017, 26). Yet, security itself remains a subjective feeling as do thresholds, which vary widely from cultures and times to places (Muguruza 2017).

The HS approach has also been subject to scrutiny regarding its practical application to the realm of governance (Krause 2009; McDonald 2002), being considered as normatively appealing, but fragile and ineffective in theoretical terms (Newman 2010; Paris 2004). Due to the theory's lack of clear policy strategies, it has been marked as the "dog that didn't bark" (Chandler 2008, 428).

Cynics of the broad approach lament that a HS definition, which ranges from the physical to the psychological and pertaining to no order or hierarchy, hinders policy makers in their decisions, forcing them to choose from a variety of threats and allocate their resources to one specific issue. They proclaim that the lack of restrictions applied to the scope of the HS agenda, results in confusion and inhibits the clarification of the causes of insecurity (McFarlane, and Khong 2006).

However, as posited by Tadjabakhsh "[...] the fallacy is in assuming that viable policies are to be made by top «political actors» [...]." The author further points out, that said political entities neglect the intricate and multi-faceted reality of threats and encourages policymaking, that is flexible and acknowledges the complexity of HS as a paradigm (Tadjabakhsh 2005). The policy's ability to establish a comprehensive, multilayered evaluation of correlated factors has been proven in a study from 2006, in which evidence from UNDP's National Development Reports are examined (Jolly, and Ray 2006).

In policy terms, there have been various attempts to promote HS from different angles, ranging from development to protection and prevention. Also, there has been improvement in the stimulation of HS, mainly through UN initiatives and HS programmes led by Canada and Japan (Muguruza 2017). Nevertheless, a lack of consensus remains on the operationalisation of HS, as well as its main objectives.

According to Muguruza (2017), in order to embrace HS as a policy framework, one must adopt an integrated approach that addresses problems caused by both violence and physical conflict, as it does economic and social scarcities (Muguruza 2017, 30). Yet, the author warns that such a comprehensive approach is bound to generate difficulties, owing to the present assortment of disciplines within the academy, stressing the need for interdisciplinary programmes (Muguruza 2017, 33).

One further strand of criticism stems from the "North/South" or "East/West" gap (Acharya 2001), which revolves around a notion of universalism that only comprises Western standards and

neglects a multiplicity of values across the globe (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007). What people consider to be vital aspects of a life worth living, varies significantly throughout cultures and societies. The in-depth approach of HS embraces all sorts of daily concerns under its umbrella and acknowledges human insecurities such as "job uncertainties and urban violence" in "northern" cities as valid and equal to issues such as poverty and famine in the "South" (Tadjbakhsh 2013).

Critics, such as Mgbeoji (2006), contend that the HS discourse reinforces old colonial power relationships and helps produce the idea of the civilised western States and barbaric other, which are considered a menace to global peace. Once the depiction of the "savage other" as an unruly horde is complete, the "civilised self" justifies its brutalisation of the former as a heaven-ordained talk of participation and civilisation. Several authors such as Black (2006), Chandler (2008) and Krause (2009), have alerted towards the fact that governments may be taking advantage of the notion of HS, as they may find that promoting the concept turns out to be a valuable tool for championing their self-interests, thereby enhancing their own status and influence in the international domain.

The adoption of the HS approach as a foreign policy tool by Canada and Japan widened the North/South divide and has continued to be subject to mishandling in international politics throughout the years. According to Tadjabakhsh (2013), by adopting HS as foreign and aid policy tools, Japan, Canada, and the EU (within the context of the Barcelona Report) began to handle HS as a "'good' that some better-off countries could provide for 'others'" (Tadjabakhsh 2013, 53) disregarding the understanding of universal justice originally set out for the concept. The author asserts that this misuse led to the implication that human insecurities were not issues the Western world faced, hence why HS was never employed as a national strategy (Tadjabakhsh 2013).

Further reinforcing the North/South divergence is the association of "freedom from fear" with the R2P principle, since this combination solely comprehends severe threats - personal, political and community insecurities - to human life as dignified to warrant humanitarian interventions, thus overlooking the remaining categories defended by the 1994 Human Development Report, which comprehend economic and environmental security, security from hunger and security from disease (Tadjabakhsh 2013, 54).

In this regard, there has been an appropriation of the concept of HS, to a point, in which humanitarian values may be used to validate self-interested actions (Christie 2010; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007, 35). Some may even venture to describe HS as a "[...] nemesis from Northern countries, wrapped in an excuse to launch 'just wars' and interventions in weak states" (Tadjabakhsh 2013, 43).

## 1.3 Operationalising Human Security

Owing to the complex and interrelated nature of insecurities and the subjectivity of its aims, the HS approach requires specification, which is achieved through the process of operationalisation. In order to operationalise a concept, one must design a contextual definition within the general definition of said concept. Contextual definitions allow for the redirection of the analytical focus of the research towards one or some specific aspects of the general concept, by emphasising and conceptualising some of its fragments, so as to attribute conceptual clarity to the concept at hand (Tzifakis 2011).

As reference for this case study, the broad definition of HS (as supported by the UN) will be applied, thereby focusing on freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom from indignity as inextricably linked components. One of the reasons for this choice is the innate partiality in security, which demands qualitative appraisal rather than quantitative measurements.

Despite contempt from narrow approach supporters, who argue that the broad definition of HS is ambiguous and essentially useless in political terms, Tadjabakhsh (2013) contends that human insecurities include objective elements, such as low income and unemployment, inadequate healthcare and poor access to quality education, all of which are represented by the broad approach. The referent object shift witnessed in this approach recognises the potential of insecurities to obstruct people's survival through physical violence or death, their livelihoods due to unemployment and health issues for instance, as well as their dignity through abuses to human rights, discrimination and other inequalities (Tadjabakhsh 2013).

Security threats defended under the broad approach also take into account the safety of States. Such hazards can hinder States' territorial integrity and, accordingly, their existence, their functioning and sovereignty, upheld by their legitimacy (Tadjabakhsh 2013). Additionally, the author defends that the act of prioritising among HS threats is a "futile exercise", for insecurities are so tightly interconnected, that eliminating one single aspect would be of little consequence to the bigger issue (Tadjabakhsh 2013, 46).

Such is the case with the research topic at hand. Particularly in ASM, child labour is a very sensible and complex matter, which demands a multi-sectorial approach, which "freedom from fear", as we know it, cannot provide. The phenomenon persists due to several factors, which altogether contribute to a vicious cycle. It must be considered a systemic issue, consisting of several dimensions. Accordingly, efforts to eliminate it must take these into consideration. In order to tackle child labour, gender equality, social protection, decent income, quality education, as well as initiatives to leverage the potential of empowered youth must be guaranteed.

In accordance with the notion of HS proposed by authors such as Acharya (2004), Alkire (2003) and Tadjabakhsh (2013), the CHS made the following statement in its report "Human Security Now" from 2003:

> Human security naturally connects several kinds of freedom—such as freedom from want and freedom from fear, as well as freedom to take action on one's own behalf (CHS 2003, 10).

The emergence of the concept of HS enabled a deeper understanding of what security entails and what causes insecurity. However, in order to effectively counter these insecurities, one must consider the concept and all it encompasses, which translates into the broad definition.

That being said, for the purpose of this dissertation, HS shall be interpreted as *freedom from fear - protection from tangible threats, such as sexual exploitation and physical abuse - freedom from want - protection of human basic needs and livelihoods – and freedom from indignity - protection of fundamental rights, ability to make choices and benefit from opportunities in daily life.*

More explicitly, within the framework of this dissertation, HS will be operationalised in the following manner:

**Table 1:** Human Security Model[8]

| **Referent object /security for whom?** | **Values/security of which values?** | **Awareness of threats /security from what?** | **Measures/security by what means?** |
|---|---|---|---|
| The individual (child) | Human rights (specifically child's rights)<br><br>Human development | Tangible Threats: violence, physical abuse<br><br>Intangible Threats: poverty, environmental degradation, neglect of social rights | Promoting development, education and social protection<br><br>Empowerment and multilateral cooperation (engagement with state and non-state entities) |

[8] Tailored from Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy. 2007. "Human Security: Concepts and Implications."

This contextual definition is the most relevant to the aims of this study, given the emphasis it places on both tangible and intangible concerns as equally valid to the promotion of HS. Considering the vast range of insecurities child labourers are exposed to, this approach enables a thorough analysis of the entirety of these security hazards and their effects on the DRC's sustainable development. In this manner, the different layers of child labour in ASM may be peeled away entirely, which in turn allows for a comprehensive response to this dissertation's research questions.

## 1.4 Defining Forced Child Labour

"Child labour" constitutes a violation of child's rights as defined by the United Nations General Assembly (UN 1989, Art. 32) and, according to the ILO is defined as "work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling." (IPEC n.d.). In addition to denying children a childhood, the detrimental effects of child labour contribute to social disparity and discrimination.

ILO considers child labour to encompass all economically active children between the ages of 5 to 11, children between the ages of 12 to 14, who work for 14 or more hours per week and, finally, children ranging from 15 to 17 years of age, who take part in an economic activity which is considered one of the "worst forms of child labour" (ILO 2002).

Under Article 3 of the 1999 ILO Convention No. 182, the worst forms of child labour are defined as follows:

a) "all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
d) 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." (ILO 1999)

In the original Forced Labour Convention from 1930, under Article 2, Section (1) the ILO defines forced labour as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily." (ILO 1930). Given the immaturity of children, and subsequent lack of valid consent, forced child labour may be viewed as any slavery-type practice as embodied by Section (a) of Article 3 in the ILO Convention No.182.

Under Section (d) the organisation identifies any type of work, which puts children at danger of physical, psychological, or sexual harm; dangerous working environments, such as underground or in confined spaces; the handling of heavy machinery and tools; exposure to toxic substances; and work for long hours, or during nighttime (ILO 1999). Taking this into consideration, mining activities fall under the description for hazardous work, therefore constituting one of the worst forms of child labour. Labour in ASM endangers children's health and safety by exposing them to all of the aforementioned hazards. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, child labour will be interpreted as hazardous work, such as considered by Article 3, Section (d) of the ILO convention No.182 (1999).

## 1.5 Human Security and Human Rights in the Context of Child Labour

Subject to intense academic debates, human rights (HR) may be conceptualised as "basic rights grounded in the dignity of each human being." (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007, 124). Having emerged in response to massive HR terrors during the Second World War, the concept was originally enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), approved in 1948 (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

HR comprise three generations (Callaway, and Harrelson-Stephens 2007; Vasak 1977; Vijapur 2009). The first generation of HR was institutionalised by a number of international treaties, among which the UDHR (1948) and later the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR 1966) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR 1966). It embraces civil and political rights, such as the right to life, freedom of speech, liberty and voting rights, for instance. The second generation includes economic, social and cultural rights, which guarantee individuals' social security, food, housing, healthcare, among other basic needs. Lastly, the third generation of HR aims to surpass the framework of individuals' rights and direct its focus towards collective rights, which affect communities and other groups. These are known as "solidarity rights" and incorporate the rights to economic and social development, natural resources and a healthy environment, for instance.

For years, academics have strived to understand and define the link between HR and HS (Alkire 2003; Benedek 2007; Oberleitner 2002; Prezelj 2008; Ramcharan 2002; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007). Consensus resides in the notion that HS and HR are two intrinsically correlated frameworks, which

benefit from each other, yet shall not be used interchangeably. That being said, the HS approach and HR share commonalities and differences alike.

Both display concerns for protecting freedoms and pursuing human dignity, as well as augmenting opportunities, all the while emphasising the importance of morality and the pervasiveness of rights (Benedek 2008; Oberleitner 2002; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007). HR arose in response to abuses to human dignity, while HS surfaced in response to violations of HR and their curtailing by the traditional sense of security. In this sense, both HS and HR have a moral/value-based foundation (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

Under the HS paradigm, the individual is elevated to the centre of a global HR framework, for in addressing HR abuses and development issues, HS focuses on the individual rather than the State (Ross 2012). HR pacts published after the Second World War served as the cornerstone in accrediting a legal personality to the individual civilian. The acknowledgment of civilians as subjects of international law aided the HS discourse by attributing a different prestige to the individual (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

Further reinforcing the interdependence between HS and HR, is the fact that all of the aforementioned HR instruments indicate personal security as a HR. Additionally, the Social Watch Report of 2004 highlights the way, in which failure to conform with economic and social rights can have a degrading effect on HS (Instituto del Tercer Mundo 2004). Moreover, both frameworks are based on a number of indivisible components. As opposed to the traditional notion of security, in which threats are dealt with separately, the HS and HR approaches assess insecurities as interdependent. While one right advances another, one source of insecurity generates another (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

In contrast to the sturdy institutionalisation of HR, which dates to 1948, the concept of HS may be seen as a neologism. In this regard, HR can assist the implementation of HS, which benefits from HR legal instruments, sanctions and conventions to coerce States to achieve their responsibilities. Per consequence, the conceptual and normative nature of HR, enhances HS, thus, improving its operationalisation. On the one hand, the legal character of HR contributes to the practical utility of HS, while on the other hand, despite criticism regarding its analytical usefulness, HS provides a practical agenda for identifying rights that are at jeopardy in specific situations and work towards sustaining mutual goals (CHS 2003[9]; Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

[9] See also: Dunne, Tim and Nicholas J. Wheeler. 2004. "'We the Peoples': Contending Discourses of Security in Human Rights Theory and Practice." *International Relations* 18 (1): 9-23 & Benedek, Wolfgang. 2008. "Human Security and Human Rights Interaction." *International Social Science Journal* 59 (1):7-17.

The implementation of HS depends on the respect for HR. Thus, the enforcement of HR should be recognised as a means of maintaining HS (Ramcharan 2004), as neglecting HR stymies society's growth, which in turn endangers HS (Doswald-Beck 2003). Therefore, it can be said that the HR framework operates as a stage for HS, whereas HS serves as a precondition to uphold HR (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

However, it is essential to consider the differences between both concepts. In its broad conception, HS includes security threats that are not included in the framework of HR - such as is the case with natural disasters (Oberleitner 2002) – and vice versa, for not all HR qualify as threats to HS. Additionally, being rooted in a political and ethical character, HS lacks a legal foundation. Yet, it is precisely HS's non-legal nature that allows for a broader analysis of HR and may, thus, provide a foundation for preventing HR abuses (Tadjbakhsh, and Chenoy 2007).

It is also argued that where HR impose a basic framework of universal obligations, HS allows for the hierarchisation of rights (Buzan 2004; Oberleitner 2005), by supporting a security discourse that promotes humanitarian intervention, thereby, paradoxically consenting to the use of force to protect HR (Ramcharan 2002). Further criticism is brought to the table by scholar Buranelli, who reasons that HS has shown to be quite distinct from HR, being more political, more ambiguous, and ironically more vulnerable to abuse (Buranelli n.d.).

Others fear the inadvertent potential of HS (in its wider sense) to undermine HR (Howard-Hassman 2012; Oberleitner 2005). As cautioned by Oberleitner:

> [...] the more human rights are integrated as a normative backbone into human security, the clearer and more practical the concept becomes, while at the same time its distinctive character as a new approach to ensuring human dignity wanes and gives way to a repackaged form of human rights. (Oberleitner 2005, 598).

Nonetheless, it is irrefutable that HS and HR share a solid bond. In fact, it was Oberleitner (2005) who referred to both frameworks are "porcupines in love", referencing the mutually enriching, complexity of their connection - both at the practical and theoretical level – and, ultimately, recommending the relationship be subject to further research.

**Table 2:** Human Rights and Human Security

| | **Human Rights** | **Human Security** |
|---|---|---|
| **Principles** | • Focusing on the individual<br>• Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms<br>• Pursuing human dignity and development<br>• Universality and indivisibility of threats/rights | |
| **Foundation** | • Ethical and legal foundation | • Ethical foundation; No legal foundation |
| **Approach** | • Follows a fundamental structure of human rights<br>• No prioritisation among human rights<br>• Applies legal instruments to prevent abuses and punish perpetrators | • Adopts human rights in their broader sense<br>• Human rights are subject to prioritisation<br>• Uses socio-cultural, economic, political and military purposes |

The aim of a rights-based approach is to ensure appropriate frameworks of accountability, to tackle the issues of poverty and poor development, by setting development strategies and policies up to date with HR norms and standards. As a result, identifying and protecting the core aspects of human life from "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" are the ultimate goals of both HS and HR (Ramcharan 2004).

While “freedom from fear” is strongly correlated to civil and political rights, “freedom from want” is reflected in social and economic rights. Finally, the notion of “freedom from indignity” is blatantly observed in the right to development and environment (Alkire 2003). Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy (2007, 121) conceive that: “Human security could be said to be a three-dimensional agenda, encompassing security, development, and rights, echoing freedom from fear, want and freedom to life in dignity.”

When considering HS in the context of human development, the latter refers to enhancing people’s choices and opportunities for leading fulfilling lives, whereas HS endeavors to pinpoint conditions, which may harm a life lived in dignity and disrupt the patterns of daily life (Tadjbakhsh, and

Chenoy 2007). Aside from being people-centred, multidimensional and adopting a broad approach to human fulfilment, both HS and human development address chronic poverty. Such are the similarities that when applying the human development approach to critically impoverished people, it may be impossible to distinguish human development from HS (Alkire 2003).

Internationally perceived as the landmark for human development issues stands the UN Development Report (1994), which stresses the importance of "people-centred" global HR programmes and addresses seven major challenges to HS. These are personal threats - including violence and abuse - political, economic, communal, health and environmental issues (UNDP 1994).

Children involved in forced labour are exposed to several of the above stated insecurities, endangering child security all over the world. The urge to offer special care to the welfare of children has been perceived in several relevant instruments, such as the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child from 1924, the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly in 1959, the ICCPR (1966), as well as the ICESCR (1966).

The concept of child rights stems mainly from the general HR movement, but equally from advancements made over the last two centuries in the educational, psychological and social fields. These were influenced by the negative effects that war, exploitation and, in the context of industrialisation, the impact that work in factories and mines had on children (Moreira *et al.* 2012).

Fresh knowledge on child development arose from a shift in narratives, previously focused on children as vulnerable and subject to parental control, to a new discourse based on child autonomy and emancipation (Moreira *et al.* 2012). All of these developments substantially impacted the adoption of a new legally binding instrument on child rights: the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the General Assembly in 1989 (UN 1989).

This convention incorporates all three HR generations and has been ratified by 199 countries (Moreira *et al.* 2012). Article 6 of the convention states:

> 1. States' parties recognize that every child has an inherent right to life.
>
> 2. States' parties shall ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the survival and development of the child (UN 1989).

Accordingly, child labour not only violates HR in general, as perceived by the UDHR (1948), but particularly the rights of the child. Victims to physical and psychological abuse on a daily basis, children work in arduous environments and inhumane conditions, which encumber their development and

contribute to a vicious cycle of human insecurities, such as a lack of education, which in turn leads to poverty and poor opportunities for development.

The broad conception of HS adopted throughout this dissertation, includes the issue of poverty, its impact on development and, ultimately, its outcome as capability deprivation. An individual's ability to meet essential needs is based upon several key elements, which can affect human development, such as education, social environment, and opportunity. Alkire (2003) outlines the firm link between HS and the capability approach, arguing, first of all, that the latter "[...] solidifies human security's central focus on human beings; [...] (it) raises the question of what people value; [...] (and) offers a basis for human security [...]." (Alkire 2003, 26).

The holistic nature of HS is of paramount importance to the discourse on child security, as millions of children, particularly in developing countries, face exploitation due to particular vulnerabilities, along with a lack of supporting systems to address abuses, leaving them to fend for themselves.

By applying the HS paradigm as a humanitarian foundation to this case study, child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, shall be examined through a multidimensional lens that embraces the rights to development and social protection, which are currently being infringed by the inhumane conditions of ASM, in which children are forced to work in.

In addition, this comprehensive framework is well equipped to address the root causes of the phenomenon, and thereby better suited to assist the UN and the EU in conceiving adequate strategies to counter them.

## Final Considerations

The concept of "human security" arose in the international arena after the Cold War, when the conventional discourse on security began to comprise ideals, such as human safety. With the intent to protect fundamental freedoms, human rights and national security, HS in its broadest form combines "freedom from fear" – mainly associated to civil and political rights - "freedom from want" – strongly perceived in social and economic rights – and "freedom from indignity" – reflected in the right to development and environment.

Undoubtedly, HS shares strong ties with the HR framework. Despite not being interchangeable terms, both benefit from one another if proper interaction is assured. Inherently people-centred, both HS and HR aim to pursue human dignity and development, so as to ensure that each individual may live a dignified and fulfilling life, free from "chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression as well

protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities." (UNDP 1994).

Hereby, this concept reveals a new scope that goes far beyond the traditional notion of insecurities restricted to people's physical integrity. As put by the CHS: "Human security complements State security, strengthens human development and enhances human rights." (CHS 2003, 2).

When addressing child security, the comprehensive nature of HS offers an advantageous ability with which to study the complex character of forced child labour, as it allows for the detection of a vast set of interconnected root causes, enabling a thorough analysis of the targeted issue.

Children involved in ASM fall victim to physical and psychological abuse and are forced to work under strenuous conditions, which hamper their development and fuel a vicious cycle of poverty and other insecurities. Hence, the urgency to address the issue from a human-rights-based perspective.

Thus, the broad approach of HS adopted for the purpose of this dissertation, provides an analytical tool apt to assist in providing context on the dynamics of child labour and aid in articulating answers to the posed research questions.

Within this chapter, the HS theoretical framework has been portrayed and operationalised, the irrefutable link between this theory and the perspectives of HR and human development established, and the concept of child labour conceptualised. The combination of these elements serves to formulate the theoretical and conceptual framework to be applied throughout this thesis.

In the following chapter, further analysis will be dedicated to the issue of child labour in a broader sense, i.e., its presence around the world, as well as, in a more restricted manner, in the DRC.

# CHAPTER II. CHILD LABOUR IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Having laid the theoretical and conceptual foundations upon which this dissertation rests, the present chapter aims to apply that same framework to the case study at hand. Thus, this section will explore the phenomenon of child labour more thoroughly, ranging from its current state across the globe, to its incidence in the DRC[10].

To contextualise the issue within this setting, aspects, such as the main drivers, consequences and pervasiveness of child labour will be taken into consideration. In order to gain better insight onto the conditions and environment endured in mining communities, both the situation of the DRC's cobalt mines, and the material's supply chains will be examined. The latter will allow for a more grounded understanding of the complexity of cobalt mining from its extraction to its exportation.

To further improve awareness on this matter, the chapter will outline the DRC's legal foundations in terms of child protection measures, as well as the regulation of its mining sector. Although government initiatives to reduce the number of children used in mines are noteworthy, their proper implementation is hampered by a lack of financial and human resources. As a result, mining in the DRC remains an unregulated and contested sector. While in the formal sector, government measures have been reasonably efficient, in the informal sector, thousands of child miners continue undetected.

By analysing the case study through the theoretical lens of HS, this chapter will attempt to address the following research question: How does child labour in the DRC pose a threat to HS?

## 2.1 Child Labour in the World

In 2020, global estimates on child labour were brought to the public in the form of a conjoint study by the ILO and UNICEF. The report indicates that, at the beginning of 2020, 160 million children, out of which 63 million girls and 97 million boys, were involved in child labour, translating into almost one in every ten children worldwide (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

Nearly half of those children take part in hazardous work, which is acknowledged by the ILO to pose a direct threat to children's safety and health (ILO 1999; World Vision 2016), as it impairs their physical and mental development (Cooper 2019; O'Donnell, van Doorslaer, and Rosati 2002). 89.3 million out of the 160 million employed children are as young as 5 to 11 years old, 35.6 million fall within

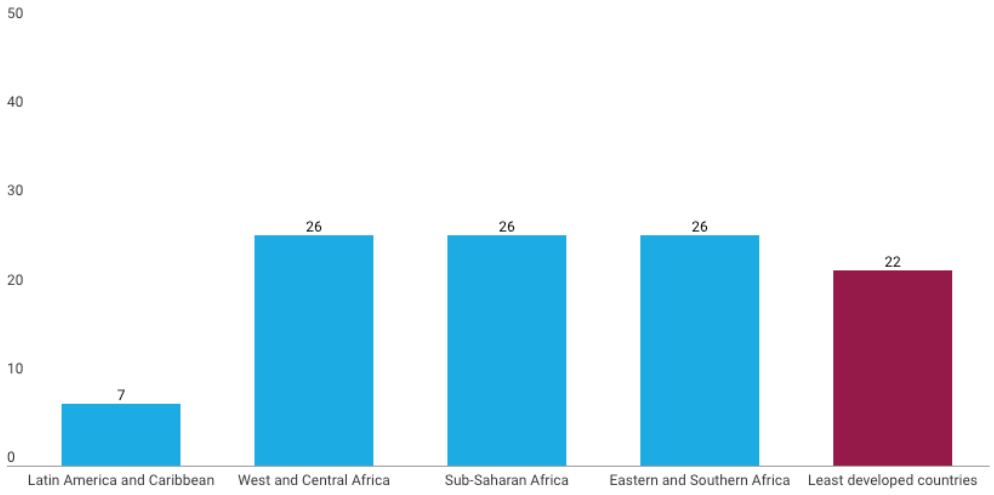
[10] Table 3 provides an overview of child labour in this particular context.

the age range of 12 to 14, and 35 million are between the ages of 15 to 17 (ILO-UNICEF 2020). The ILO estimates that worldwide, each year, about 22 000 children are killed performing this type of activity (IPEC n.d.).

Despite being within the mandatory education age limit, a large proportion of children in child labour do not frequent schools (Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra 2017; ILO 2015; World Vision 2016). As depicted by the report, over a quarter of affected children, between 5 and 11, and more than a third of those aged 12 to 14 are not in school (ILO-UNICEF 2020). By interfering with schooling and medical care, child labour drastically limits children's future prospects and inhibits their overall potential.

In accordance with UNICEF's updated global databases (2013 to 2021), across the world's poorest nations, a little over one in every five children are economically active (UNICEF 2022). Within low-income regions, the African continent accounts for much of the global increase, with Sub-Saharan Africa harbouring the highest proportion of child labourers. In this region the practice affects 26% of children from the ages of 5 to 17, a blatant contrast to the numbers observed in Latin America and the Caribbean, where respectively 7% are in child labour[11] (UNICEF 2022).

**Figure 1:** Percentage of Children Aged 5 to 17 Years in Child Labour, by Region (2013-2021)



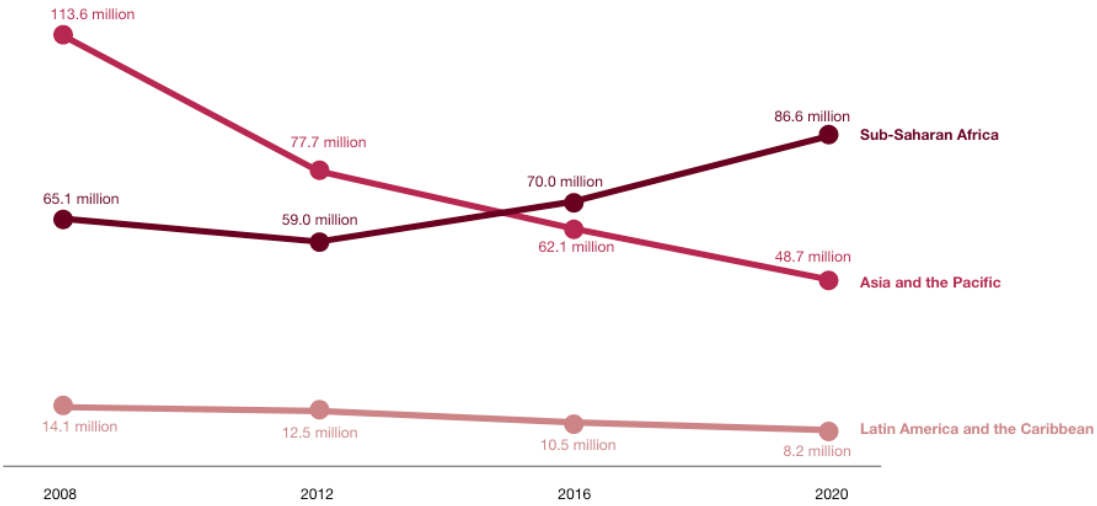

Source: UNICEF 2022.

Significant changes were observed between 2008 and 2020 in Asia and the Pacific with a drop in the number of child labour by 64.9 million. In this same timeframe, Latin America and the Caribbean witnessed steady progress with a decline in the number of child labourers by 6 million. Conversely, in

[11] See Figure 1.

Sub-Saharan Africa the prevalence of children in labour has continued to increase since 2012[12] (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

**Figure 2:** Number of Child Labourers Between the Ages of 5 to 17, by Region (2008-2020)




Source: ILO-UNICEF 2020.

Reasoning for this discrepancy lies in a number of socio-economic factors predominant in this region. While the reduction of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa has been effective in recent years, levels remain disproportionate to other parts in the world, as over 40% of the population lives in extreme poverty (ILO-UNICEF 2020). Dynamics such as rapid population growth, inequality rates, as well as social exclusion and poor access to education endure in the region, thus contributing to the persistence of child labour (Galli 2001; Maya Jariego 2021; Sarkar and Sarkar 2012).

Another aspect to consider is informality (Cumberland 2019; Gausi 2018). As revealed by ILO and UNICEF, 86% (ILO-UNICEF 2020) of all jobs in this region are based on the informal economy, which is responsible for low incomes, harmful working conditions and the lack of social security systems (Adoho and Doumbia 2018). In the face of these conditions, many families turn to child labour to alleviate financial hardship. Despite notable efforts to decrease education exclusion and increase social protection systems, rates in Sub-Saharan Africa remain below the world average (World Bank 2022).

Child labour is prevalent in both industrialised and developing countries, yet it has a 50% higher incidence than the global average in countries affected by armed conflict (ILO-UNICEF 2020). The Sub-

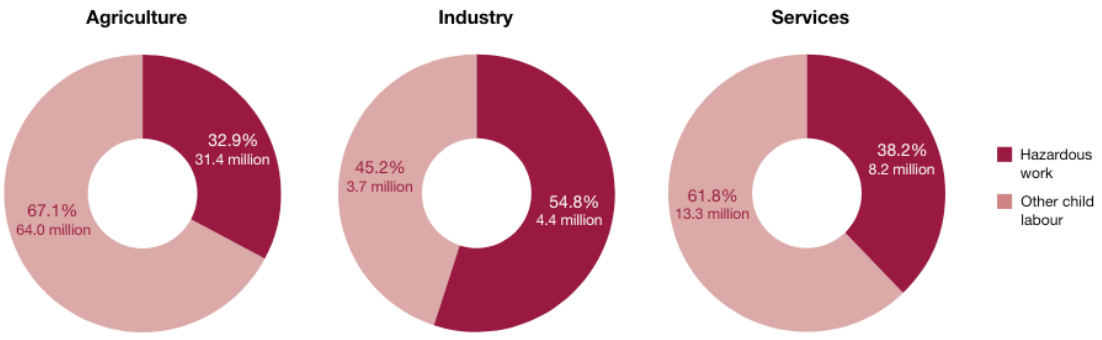
[12] See Figure 2.

Saharan region is home to most unstable, conflict-ridden nations, having witnessed conflict in at least a quarter of those, every year in the period between 2015 and 2020 (IEP 2021). Limited prospects for resilience to natural disasters and climate change, as well as the high number of people affected by the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, add to the disparities felt in this region and restrict opportunities to shift away from a cycle of poverty and degradation (ILO-UNICEF 2020; UNDP 2019; World Bank 2022).

In general, child labour affects more boys than girls across all ages. This is mainly traceable to the fact that household chores (for 21 hours or more per week), in which mostly girls are involved, do not fall under the definition of "child labour". Estimates unveil that the phenomenon primarily takes place in the agriculture sector, accounting for 70% of all child workers, irrespective of sex (ILO-UNICEF 2020). Children working in services and industries make up a smaller, but all the while significant portion of the child labour force. Yet, those working within the family household actually represent the highest proportion of the practice. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 82% of children work in the domestic environment, where hazardous working conditions are considerably recurrent (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

In effect, hazardous work is largely present across all three sectors of economic activity (agriculture, industry and services). The following chart[13] provides insight onto the number and percentage of children, aged 5 to 14, in child labour, by sector and hazardous work status. The numbers provided suggest that a substantial portion of children are exposed to hazardous working conditions, especially in the industrial sector, where this type of work is predominant.

**Figure 3:** Number and Percentage of Child Labourers, Aged 5 to 14, Distributed by Economic Sector and Hazardous Work Status




Source: ILO-UNICEF 2020.

[13] See Figure 3.

According to the 2019 Human Development Index, which links measures of education, health and income, as the level of human development increases, the presence of child labour decreases. As examined in the conjoint study by ILO and UNICEF, in countries in which the human development index is considered low (less than 0.550), the percentage of child labour reaches 24.8%, whereas in countries in which the index rates at 0.800 or higher (labelled very high), its incidence drops to 2.9% (ILO-UNICEF 2020). This points towards an urgency to address the phenomenon from a "HS infused" perspective, as this paradigm includes concerns for human development aiming at reducing conflict and poverty, among other root causes of child labour.

Statistics provided by the ILO-UNICEF report suggest that, if measures to counter the results found are not taken into consideration, by the end of 2022 further 8.9 million children will be occupied in some sort of labour (ILO-UNICEF 2020). This prediction is majorly traceable to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on poverty rates, given that it affects mainly poor income countries. School closure and job loss have contributed to an increased number of children in low-income households, and subsequently to the proliferation of child labour, which is used as a means to cope with such setbacks (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

## 2.2 Child Labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Following a general analysis of the latest numbers on child labour and its current status across the world, this subsection strives to more intimately embrace the practice within the context of this project's case study. Accordingly, aspects such as the root causes, consequences and scope of child labour in the DRC's artisanal mines will be explored.

To better advance awareness of the issue, the poor conditions and harmful environment faced by Congolese mining communities will be taken into account. Under this premise, government efforts to alleviate the situation will be evaluated and the country's legislative framework, as well as the regulation of its mining sector, reviewed.

### 2.2.1 Drivers of Child Labour in Mining

Owing to its vast mineral wealth, historically, the country's economy was based on the exportation of its natural resources. First under Belgian colonisation (1908-1960) and later under the Mobutu regime

(1965-1997), the mining sector in the DRC thrived, so that in the 70s and 80s, the largest state-owned mining company, Gécamines (*Génerale des Carrières et des Mines*), located in the southeastern province of former Katanga[14], accounted for over 60% of all export income (Amnesty International 2016).

In the 1990s, mining activity decreased as Gécamines collapsed. This led to great socio-economic transformations, submerging the entire region in absolute poverty. The dependency of thousands of local families on mining, further intensified in the aftermath of the two Congo wars (1996-2003) and the resulting economic and political crises (Calvão, Mcdonald and Bolay 2021; Mazalto 2009).

**Figure 4:** Congolese Provinces Before 2015


Source: Amnesty International 2016

During this period of economic hardship, the industrial mining sector, commonly known as Large Scale Mining (LSM), saw much of its decline, whereas Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM) continued to flourish. Seeking to reverse the waning of LSM, in 2002 the Congolese government adopted Mining Code no.007/2002 (DRC 2002) in attempts to attract foreign investments and revive Gécamines. This

[14] See Figure 4.

code stipulated that artisanal mining be limited to *Zones d'exploitation artisanale* (Artisanal Mining Zones or ZEAs), in which LSM was not feasible. However, the government created very few ZEAs in southern DRC, which compelled many artisanal miners to work in unauthorised areas or infringe on industrial mining corporations' properties (Amnesty International 2016).

In 2016, the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations reported the relocation of communities in this region, in order to make space for LSM. According to the report, the population was displaced to areas with poor soil and foundations, which lacked access to potable water. Having endured decades of conflict, disease and corruption[15], the DRC rates as one of the poorest countries worldwide[16] and deficient reimbursement for these relocations, served to further push local communities into fragile economic situations (Scheele, de Haan, and Kiezebrink 2016).

The ever-increasing demand for raw minerals has led to the establishment of several industrial mines, as well as a spike in both legal and illegal artisanal mines, in which child labour is most prevalent (André and Godin 2013). From the 160 million children employed worldwide, 10% of them are engaged in the industrial and manufacturing sector, which includes the mining industry (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

In the DRC, child labour has been detected in one in every four artisanal mining sites (Matthysen, Spittaels, and Schouten 2019; OECD 2019). The last study conducted by UNICEF, in 2014, estimated that 40 000 children worked, under strenuous and inhumane conditions, in artisanal mines across the country (Amnesty International 2016). In 2018, further research was carried out on the situation of cobalt miners in the DRC's south-eastern provinces, including a number of unreported, secluded areas near the Zambian border (Kara 2018). The data collected by Kara (2018) suggests that, across the 31 artisanal mines contemplated within the study, approximately 35 000 of the over 255 000 cobalt miners are children, some of which are as young as six years old (Kara 2018).

Despite being a signatory to the most relevant international treaties on child security, thousands of children remain undetected in the DRC's cobalt mines, for the majority of mining activities in the country take place illegally, with minimum regulation and monitoring. For years, international entities have documented serious human rights abuses in mining operations, particularly in ASM[17]. However, child labour in artisanal mining continues to evolve.

One of the key reasons for the perpetuation of child labour is pervasive poverty, as about 60% of households in the country remain dependent on mining as their primary source of income (US DOL

[15] Knoema 2020; IEP 2021; UNDP 2020; Transparency International 2021; Resource Watch 2019.
[16] OPHI and UNDP 2021.
[17] Human Rights Watch 2009; US Department of State 2020; OHCHR 2010 & 2016; UN General Assembly 2019; World Vision 2009 & 2012.

2019). According to the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (2021), 77.2% of the Congolese population lives below the income poverty line, earning less than USD 1.90 a day (OPHI and UNDP 2021, 29).

Enduring poverty in the region is, in part, traceable to the high levels of corruption in the country and to the improper allocation of funds to advance the socio-economic development of mining communities (Transparency International 2021). Research from Global Witness (2017) and Carter Center (2017) reveals that between 2011 and 2014, Gécamines - infamously known for its nontransparent financing – was responsible for laundering hundreds of millions of dollars.

The illegal use of children in mining is facilitated by the involvement of rebel armed groups in mining sites, illegal subcontracting, and lack of transparent documentation regarding the production and exportation of mined goods, for instance. Low birth registration rates further complicate the control of child labour in mining activities (Callaway 2018). Moreover, the lack of adequate employment opportunities for young people leads families to prioritise child labour, as opposed to investing in education (World Vision 2016).

In addition, rising cobalt prices serve as incentive for many to work illegally alongside industrial sites, further aggravating working conditions (Cooper 2019). One should also note that the engagement of children in mines comes with several benefits for employers, such as cheaper labour, a submissive and compliant work force, dispensation from providing social protection, as well as several advantageous physical traits applied to certain types of mining activities, such as smaller hands and more agile bodies (World Vision 2016).

The fact that political situation in the DRC remains volatile does not aid in the overall situation of children in the country. In the face of planned elections for 2023, a deepening crisis has emerged from tensions between the current president Félix Tshisekedi and former president Joseph Kabila (EurAc-PAX 2021). Despite the signing of several peace agreements and the presence of the UN's largest peacekeeping operation, the UN Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), conflict in the country has yet to cease (Council on Foreign Relations 2022). Between September and October of 2021 alone, 1024 human rights violations were documented by MONUSCO, 93% of which occurred in provinces affected by conflict (MONUSCO-OHCHR 2020b).

Owing to the insecurity generated by the presence of armed forces in many of its regions, the humanitarian situation in the DRC continues to worsen as it is exacerbated by epidemics, poor access to basic services and a strained health system, in part due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The illegal extraction of minerals is directly linked to the funding of these armed groups, which further perpetuate instability and violence across the country. In response to impending insecurity in the country generated by the

effects of the pandemic, new waves of displacement ensued resulting in the highest number of internally displaced persons in the African continent (Council on Foreign Relations 2022).

As emphasised by the ILO and UNICEF, refugee children are more susceptible to becoming involved in child labour (ILO-UNICEF 2020), which significantly raises the probability of its presence in the DRC. According to MONUSCO, between the 18th of September and the 15th of November 2021, 154 violations against children were verified (UN Security Council 2021). In addition to reoccurring child recruitment by armed groups, conflict-related sexual violence and other types of attacks, there is evidence of maiming of innocent civilians, including several attacks on schools (US DOL 2020).

### 2.2.2 Cobalt Mining and its Concerns

In light of the uncertainty generated in the DRC, following the Mobutu (1965-1997) and the Laurent-Desiré Kabila (1997-2001) regimes, President Joseph Kabila loosened numerous laws and implemented a mining legislation developed by the World Bank, shortly after taking office in 2001. This new legislation served to attract foreign investment by providing a company-oriented mining code with numerous fiscal benefits. It soon became clear that despite benefitting investors, the code had drastically increased poverty in the country (Sovacool 2021).

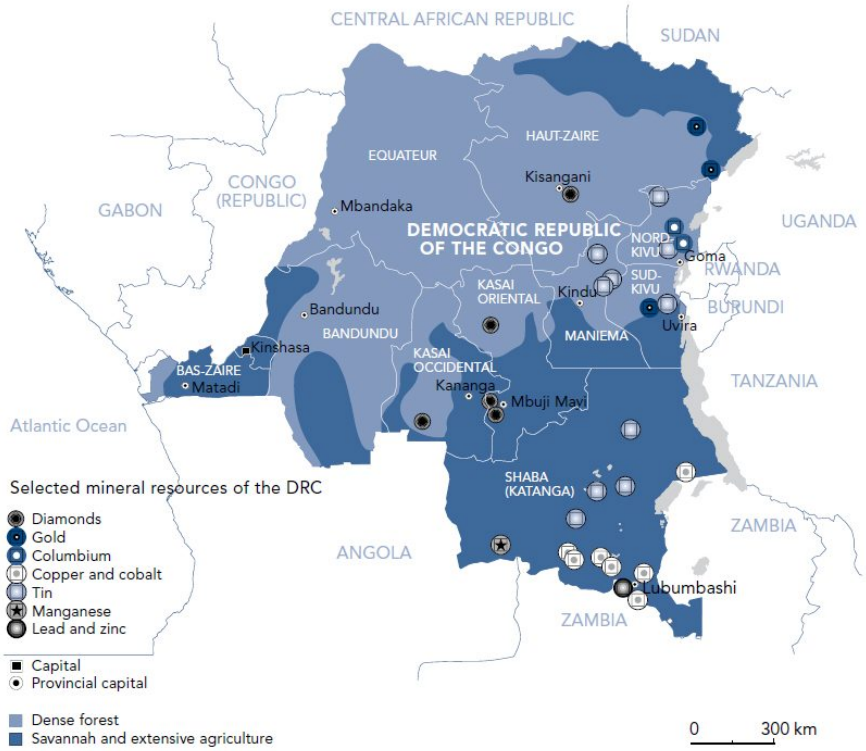
As a result of discussions with partners, ranging from civil society to the private sector and government representatives, a new mining code (DRC 2018) was approved in 2018 (Kabemba and Kambale 2018). This new version of the code rectified any outdated clauses, increased taxes and enhanced measures for worker and community protection (Sovacool 2021). Today, Congolese mining is governed by the following main legal frameworks: the 2002 Mining Code; the accompanying Mining Regulation from 2003 (DRC 2003), which formed the Assistance and Supervision Service for Small-Scale Mining (Amnesty International 2013); and the 2018 Mining Code, which replaced the previous code from 2002 (Sovacool 2021).

The country's vast mining riches make it one of the most important African countries in geostrategic terms. According to statistics from 2021, the DRC is known to house nearly half of the world's cobalt reserves, reaching 3.5 million metric tons (Statista 2022), rendering it today's world leading cobalt producer. Cobalt is an essential mineral, mainly applied in the production of lithium batteries, which in turn serve to power electric cars, mobile phones, tablets, among other electronic devices. The material is seen as indispensable in the manufacture of these devices, mainly due to its magnetic properties and ability to withstand intense temperatures and conditions. Estimates from Bloomberg Markets

(McKerracher and Wagner 2021) indicate that, over the next two decade two thirds of all vehicles will be electric. As such, cobalt demands will increase drastically until 2040, as will the mineral's supply and, consequently, mining itself.

However, it is precisely this abundance in natural resources[18], which has placed the DRC at the centre of HS concerns at a global level, for much of the country's instability can be attributed to the exploitation of its minerals, and the illegal handling of highly coveted natural resources to ongoing conflicts in the region (Mazalto 2009).

**Figure 5:** Mineral Resources in the DRC




Source: Charlie 2018.

The world's largest cobalt supply stems from the former Katanga region, also known as the "copperbelt", which encompasses the Lualaba and Haut-Katanga regions, located in the southernmost part of the DRC (Cooper 2019). In this region, around 65% to 85% of cobalt is extracted as a by-product of copper mining in LSM, which is subject to rigorous supervision by operators and the local government,

[18] See Figure 5.

whereby 15% to 35% of the material is mined in ASM (Cobalt Institute 2021), known for its small individually owned mines run by family members illegally, as they don't have mining licenses.

According to surveys conducted by Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra (2017) across several artisanal mining communities in the copperbelt region, as of 2017 there were approximately 270 mining sites in this area, most of which were artisanal mining sites. These were either official artisanal mining zones (ZEAs), inactive industrial zones or illegal artisanal mines (Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra 2017). Assessments indicate that there are approximately 255 000 artisanal miners working in these mining sites, many of which are children as young as six years old, who work excruciatingly long hours searching for cobalt-bearing rocks in the discarded by-products of industrial mines, washing and separating the ore in lakes and rivers before selling it (Kara 2018).

The prevalence of child labour in this sector is higher than in LSM, as ASM tends to operate with minimal supervision, leaving children exposed to hazardous working conditions and, in some cases, forced labour (US DOL 2019). In artisanal mining, few to no qualifications are demanded from workers, which allows for the employment of young, inexperienced children in the sector. Further fueling the presence of children in these mines are the low salaries and the lack of national social protection mechanism and healthcare provided, which may compel children to step in their parent's place, in the event of their injury. Additionally, the seasonal nature of these mines can lead to the displacement of families, often interrupting children's education in the process (ILO 2005).

As such, ASM is regarded as one of the worst forms of child labour and is known to have detrimental effects to the overall health of children[19], as well as long-term effects for societies themselves. Children living in these communities work to support their families and are mainly engaged in grading, surface excavation and mineral cleaning (Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra 2017). Those working in mining are exposed to harsh conditions in remote areas, from lacking sanitation, no access to drinking water, to carrying heavy loads and using toxic chemicals to extract metals from rocks, for long hours under the sun. The lack of basic protective equipment and the limited use of mechanisation typical of this sector, further exposes children to these hazards (Amnesty International 2016). In artisanal excavation areas, cobalt mines are dug by hand and can reach tens of meters in depth. In underground structures children crawl in small spaces, deprived of fresh air while facing the risk of explosions and excessive dust and toxic fumes, which in turn lead to chronic lung diseases. In the absence of any kind of ventilation or method of stabilisation, these mines increase the risks of a collapse and potential death of miners (ILO 2005).

[19] For detailed information on the psychological effects of child labour, see Kaur (2022) and Trinh (2020).

In addition, cobalt has the potential to damage the heart, thyroid, and lungs and can be found in over 80% of children living near a mining site (Cataleta 2020). The DRC mining codes are partly responsible for this overexposure, as they do not provide any guidance regarding safety equipment or the handling of substances that can be harmful to miners' health (Amnesty International 2016). The European Commission further enumerates cancer, infertility, chronic backpain and vulnerability to diseases such as AIDS, as some of the potential long-lasting health problems associated to hazardous work (EC 2021a). In addition to the routine difficulties of daily work, children are exposed to the degrading mining environment, possibly falling victim to violence and criminality, debt bondage, prostitution, and human trafficking (ILO 2005).

For some time, cobalt was viewed as a source of green energy, a notion derived from its recyclable nature. However, the production of cobalt greatly damages the environment. Evidence of this is clear in the DRC's mining cities Lubumbashi and Kolwezi, considered by experts as one of the ten most polluted areas on Earth (Heudebourg 2018). In accordance with data published by Amnesty International, the discharge of waste from mineral processing plants is contaminating rivers and lakes in the area, signifying the possibility of alarming consequences for the environment. Additionally, evidence suggests that exposure to toxic pollution is also causing birth defects in children in mining regions (Amnesty International 2016).

According to the International Peace Information Service (IPIS), an estimated 66% of the mines in the east of the country are currently affected by interference from armed groups (Matthysen, Spittaels, and Schouten 2019). The fact that ASM commonly occurs in geographically remote areas, hinders the government's control over affected territories and since the State lacks the necessary capital to develop the mining industry, it has been replaced by armed groups who impose their own laws. A system which, in turn, creates obstacles to the enforcement of worker protection standards (Matthysen, Spittaels, and Schouten 2019).

The US Department of Labour attributes the involvement of the military in the cobalt supply chain to the inability of the government to properly pay its soldiers, thus prompting them to find alternative forms of revenue (US DOL 2019). Studies indicate that these groups profit economically from the lack of worker unions or cooperatives in mines (Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra 2017). According to Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra, merely 2.5% of mines have a union, granting the rest of mines less leverage for negotiation. Surveys conducted in the area, reveal that less than half of all mines are under protection of the Mine Police, so that other mines are controlled by private agencies, national

groups or organisations. These often lack mandates to work at the mines and are likely to use their status to make private gain (Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra 2017).

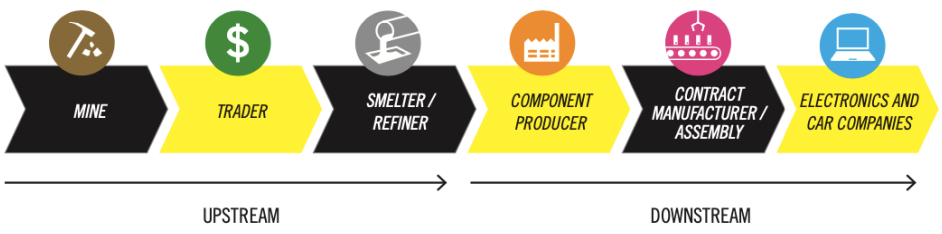
### 2.2.3 Cobalt Supply Chain

The process of globalisation has contributed to the reduction of trade and information costs across borders and, ultimately, led to the growth of global supply chains. These connect end users in affluent nations to labour forces in underdeveloped ones, who – mainly due to deficient labour protection laws and low labour costs - enter the supply chains of multinational corporations, where there is often little supervision of trading chains and human rights abuses are frequent (Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra 2017).

Cobalt mined in the DRC enters a global trading network as soon as it is sold to licensed buying houses, which in turn sell the mineral to international trading firms responsible for refining the product before its exportation. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) divides companies, at different stages of the supply chain, into two categories: "upstream" and "downstream". Upstream companies include smelters and traders in the country where the mineral is found. Downstream companies comprise all companies that buy cobalt, manufacture or sell components that contain cobalt after it has been processed. These include the brands that sell products to consumers (Amnesty International 2016).

The following chart provides a clear depiction of the DRC's cobalt supply chain. After extraction, artisanal miners sell their product to buying houses or act as intermediaries for child labourers, who cannot legally sell the mined ore. These authorised houses then sell to large corporations, which smelt and export the processed mineral.

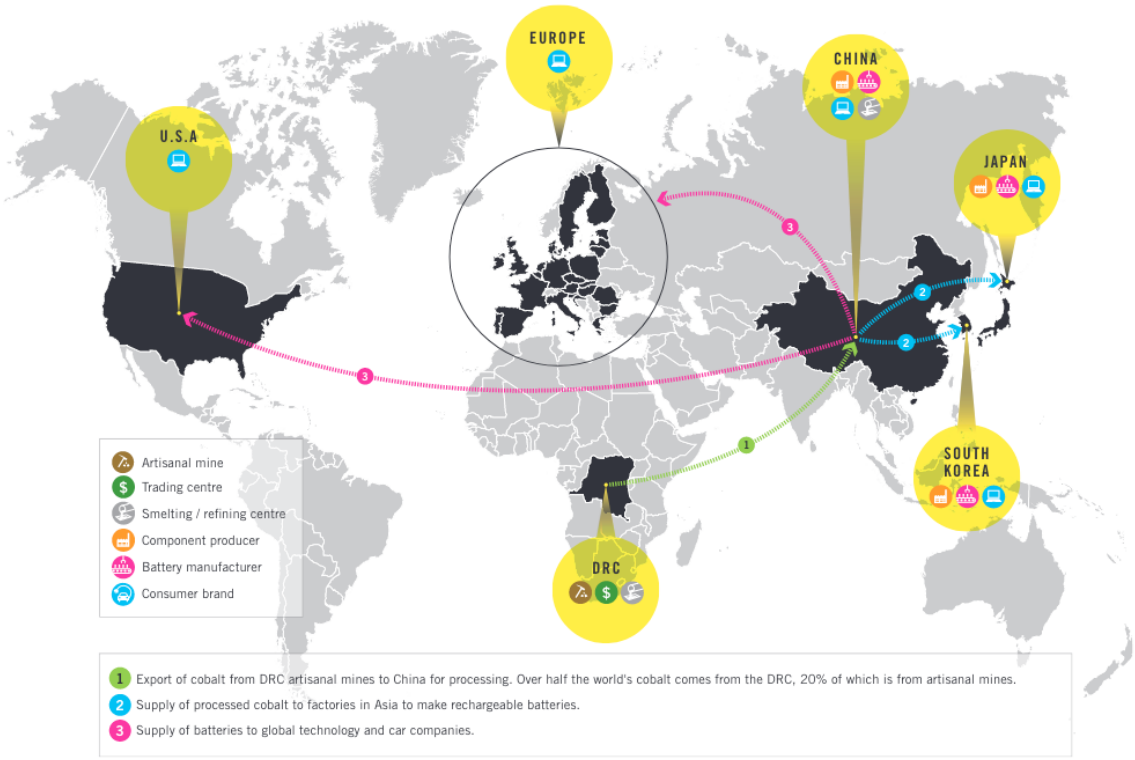
**Figure 6:** Cobalt Supply Chain




Source: Amnesty International 2016.

According to Amnesty International and Afrewatch, one of the largest companies at the center of this trade is Congo Dongfang Mining International (CDM), a subsidiary of the Chinese company Huayou Cobalt, one of the leading producers of cobalt products at a global scale. Operating in the DRC since 2006, CDM buys cobalt from traders, who buy directly from miners, smelts the ore in the DRC before exporting to China, where it then sells the material to battery component manufacturers in China and South Korea. In turn, these companies sell to other manufacturers, who resell to well-known consumer brands such as Apple, Dell, HP, Huawei, Lenovo, LG, Microsoft Corporation, Samsung, Sony, among others (Amnesty International 2016). The illustration below depicts the trajectory of cobalt from ASM in the DRC to its entry into the global market.

**Figure 7:** Global Trading Network of Cobalt




Source: Amnesty International 2016.

In 2011, the OECD released a due-diligence framework - "OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas" - to guide the cobalt trading sector to ensure responsible sourcing in their supply chains. In accordance with the OECD Fragility

Index, the DRC is considered "extremely fragile"[20] in economic, societal, political and environmental terms (OECD 2020). Accordingly, the DRC can be viewed as a conflict-affected and high-risk area as defined by the OECD Due Diligence rules, thereby subjecting corporations sourcing from the country to the framework (Cooper 2019). Similar guidance was launched in 2017 by China's Chamber of Commerce of Metals Minerals & Chemicals Importers and Exporters, with the intent to support companies such as Apple, HP, Samsung and Sony to conform with the rules established by the OECD to eradicate child labour from supply chains (Conca 2018).

In 2016, Amnesty International directly accused several automation and electronics firms of not complying with measures to detect child labour in their supply chains (Conca 2018) and in 2017, a subsequent report from Amnesty examined the policy frameworks of 29 corporations known for using cobalt in their products. Results pointed towards some progress in cobalt sourcing with little positive impacts (Cooper 2019). Yet, this lack of conformity can, in part, be explained by the difficulty in assessing the engagement of children in artisanal mining. The often-unofficial character of ASM complicates the traceability of cobalt, particularly when children are involved. In the DRC, children use intermediaries to sell their products to trading houses, which in turn sell to bigger companies and so on. In addition, occasionally LSM companies mine their cobalt from ASM, later blending the material with their own production. This way, ensuring the product was not mined by children becomes a challenging task (O'Driscoll 2017).

Therefore, many companies chose to avoid ASM altogether, promoting the ideal of a supply chain solely controlled by LSM. However, this reasoning leads to the neglect of issues related to ongoing corruption and massive environmental pollution in industrial mining. While disengaging from ASM might decrease child labour momentarily, it will certainly have detrimental effects on the livelihood of families by increasing the poverty rate in mining communities across the country, which will turn the goal of sustainable development more difficult to achieve (Sovacool 2019).

Retrospective of heightened risks posed by the global Covid-19 pandemic, on the 15th of May 2020, several global civil society organisations and community-based associations released a call for greater humanitarian action in conflict-affected areas and particularly artisanal mining communities. Concerns stems from the fact that the pandemic has made the deep-seated injustices in mineral supply chains even more evident (EurAc 2020).

The closure of borders and legal businesses has led to the disruption of many supply chains; a drop in ore prices continues to economically deprive mining communities; and the restriction of formal

[20] See page 24 of "States of Fragility 2020" (OECD 2020) for detailed information.

chains has driven even more people into the informal sector. In these cases, children and women become particularly more vulnerable to extortion, sexual violence, and gender-based discrimination, for instance. In essence, the collapse of these chains has the potential to increase insecurity and division, by leaving room for further corruption and exploitation by illicit traders (EurAc 2020).

### 2.2.4 Government Action

As a member of the UN since 1960, at the international level, the DRC has ratified the most relevant human rights treaties, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR 1966) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR 1966), the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD 1965), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979) and the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT 1984).

In 2001, the DRC ratified both ILO conventions on child labour, namely, the Minimum Age Convention No. 138 (ILO 1973) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182 (ILO 1999). These call for the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including slavery, forced labour, and trafficking, and prohibit the use of children under 18 in armed conflict, prostitution, pornography, and illicit activities, such as drug trafficking (ILO 2021f).

At the continental level and as a member of the African Union since 1963, the DRC has adopted the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Union 1981) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Union 1990), which has been deemed the first regional binding document in promoting children's rights in Africa.

Despite these conventions, there is a lack of a uniform legal definition for child labour, which in addition to difficulties in obtaining accurate data on impacted children, hinders cross-country comparison. In accordance with both ILO Conventions, what constitutes hazardous work is concluded by national regulations and laws enacted by signatory countries, which inhibits a standard measure to hazardous work from a legal standpoint (O'Driscoll 2017).

Moreover, irrespective of robust national legislation on child protection[21], due to weak penalties, poor coordination and a lack of resources, there has been little enforcement and implementation of

[21] For detailed information on Congolese laws and regulations see: US, Department of Labor. 2020. "Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor."

existing laws, and consequently, not much improvement of the general situation of children in child labour (Cooper 2019).

In January 2009, the Child Protection Code (DRC 2009) was established. This law prohibits the worst forms of child labour; mandates that free and compulsory education be provided to all children; that the minimum age of criminal responsibility be raised to 14 and the minimum age of employment be 16. In order to achieve these goals, the code appoints the Minister of Labour and Social Security as responsible for implementing adequate legislation to counter the worst forms of child labour (Kamwimbi 2013). The endorsement of this act is of paramount importance to the DRC's national legislation, as it has boosted legal protection for exploited children and embraced the value of the CRC (Kamwimbi 2013).

However, due to a lack of proper public resource allocation, the majority of schools in the DRC continue to charge fees (Cooper 2019), which creates inconsistencies and hinders the practical implementation of laws at the national level. The absence of financial resources also inhibits the action of government agencies for child safety, such as the National Children's Council and the National Women's Council. The Assistance and Supervision Service for Small-Scale Mining, responsible for monitoring the ASM sector also lacks financing and human resources to do so (Kamwimbi 2013).

In 2010, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) conducted research on the labour standards situation in the DRC and, subsequently, released a report indicating several violations of these standards, particularly the involvement of children in forced labour. Findings suggest the lack of trade, the involvement of corrupt officials and gender discrimination in mining sites. Furthermore, the report signals towards the poor enforcement of laws to protect children, who fall victim to prostitution and armed conflict, seen as up until the release of the report there was no agency charged with monitoring these crimes (Global March Against Child Labour 2021).

Aware of these concerns, in 2012, the DRC passed a law (DRC 2012a) demanding all mineral trading companies comply with the OECD Due Diligence Framework (Amnesty International 2013). In 2014, the DRC became a member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), with the intent to improve traceability of natural resources in the country, by making their management more transparent (EITI 2014).

After years of minimal improvement of the child labour situation in the country's cobalt mines, in 2016, the government made significant efforts to eradicate the practice (US DOL 2016), including the establishment of a new age verification procedure, to prevent the recruitment of minors by the country's national armed forces (EEAS 2017b).

That being said, since 2019 the DRC has been implementing projects to improve attendance rates in schools, including the Education Sector Recovery Support Project, an initiative that has resulted in the enrollment of millions of students (Vivuya 2020). In 2020, President Felix Tshisekedi implemented measures to increase funding for public schools and approved construction plans for schools. However, in the aftermath of nationwide school closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic and overall budgetary issues, these plans remain yet to be implemented (Vivuya 2021).

In addition, the enactment of national measures to counter child labour remains deficient, due to a lack of sustainable alternatives for families living in chronic poverty, who resort to labour in mines. Laurence Blattmer, programme coordinator of NGO Dominicans for Justice and Peace, highlights the importance of accompanying President Tshisekedi's announcement for free primary education with legal measures to improve families' social and economic situations, as well as improve public awareness campaigns for families working in ASM. Many children become involved in the practice by accompanying their mothers to the sites. Therefore, Blattmer suggests the empowerment of young women, so that they can find ways to leave the mining sector, and per consequence lower the incidence of children in ASM (Crux 2020).

Despite new legislative and institutional modifications to the Congolese mining sector introduced by the government, there are still gaps in the DRC's legal framework to adequately protect children from child labour. According to the Congolese legal system, a child is any "person who, without regard to sex, has not yet attained 18 years of age." (DRC 2006). Yet, the Child Protection Act of 2009 raises the minimum age for employment from 14 to 16 years, and the 2002 Mining Code allows the admission of any child above the age of 15 into the labour market, as long as there is consent from a parent or legal guardian (Kamwimbi 2013).

Additionally, there are discrepancies regarding the age of compulsory schooling. Since children are only required to attend school up to the age of 12, children aged 12 to 15 are still vulnerable to child labour, as they are not required to attend school but are also not legally allowed to work, as the minimum age for work is 16. Similarly, some aspects of the Child Protection Code remain to be officially adopted, which prevents multiple provisions from being enforced. These gaps in the legislation lead to confusion when implementing laws and regulating the mining sector (US DOL 2020).

Nevertheless, several mechanisms have been put in place to enforce child labour regulations. These include the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2012–2025) (DRC 2012b), which works alongside UNICEF to promote the implementation of child protection laws, particularly those on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and the Child Soldiers Action Plan

(DRC 2012c). The latter is a UN-based initiative, which seeks to prevent the employment of minors in armed forces, by holding abusers accountable and establishing reintegration services, all the while strengthening the collaboration between the UN and the Congolese government.

There are also several plans to address child labour in ASM, such as the National Sectoral Strategy to Combat Child Labour in Artisanal Mines and Artisanal Mining Sites (2017–2025) (DRC 2017) established by the Ministry of Mines. This plan aims to improve law enforcement, reinforce child protection mechanisms, as well as strengthen data collection methods, so as to end child labour by 2025. By implementing National Action Plans to prevent human trafficking and address sexual violence in conflict scenarios, the DRC strives to enhance support mechanisms to prevent the commercialisation of children, specifically girls (US DOL 2020).

In 2019, the DRC established the Entreprise Générale du Cobalt (EGC), a subsidiary of Gécamines, with the intent to promote responsible cobalt sourcing in artisanal mines, by formalising the sector and, thus, promote human rights, as well as preserve the environment and the safety of mining communities. The formalisation of the ASM sector refers to the development of the informal sector to comply with the international human rights and environmental standards and address the root causes of child labour in doing so (Cobalt Institute 2021). Working alongside the Agency for Regulation and Control of Strategic Mineral Substance Markets, the EGC ensures that cobalt is safely and sustainably mined, by buying all the ore obtained from ASM in the country, prior to its processing and trade (DRC 2021).

Considering these efforts, the US Department of Labour, acknowledges the improvements made by the DRC in 2020 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, by highlighting the advancements of the anti-trafficking action plan, the government's mandate for universal education, as well as the successes of the DRC's Armed Forces, which successfully prosecuted an army officer found guilty of trafficking children (US DOL 2020). However, the same year, the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour published a report on the DRC, indicating that despite efforts to remove children from mines, the country lacked the necessary financial means for the responsible agencies to conduct inspections. Additionally, as of 2020 there was no designated child labour inspection service (US Department of State 2020).

In February 2020, the African Union and its members reinforced their commitment to the fight against all forms of child labour, by adopting the "Ten Year Action Plan to Eradicate Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery (2020-2030)" (African Union 2020), which involves eliminating child labour by 2025 and other forms of exploitation such as forced labour, human trafficking, and modern slavery by 2030 (African Union 2021). The Action Plan intends to advance the fulfilment of

the African Union Agenda 2063 (African Union Commission 2015) and the UN SDGs, particularly target 8.7 (Alliance 8.7 2018), by uniting different partners of the institution and its Member States and outlining obligations at the national, regional, and continental levels, relevant to the achievement of these goals (African Union 2021).

Launched in 2016, Alliance 8.7 bridges several sectors, bringing together governments, NGO's, academic institutions, and multinational corporations to aid in the implementation of goals relevant to the elimination of child labour and other types of exploitation (Alliance 8.7 2018). Furthermore, the African Union stresses its contributions to the UN SDGs through the drafting of the Common African Position on the post 2015 Development Agenda (African Union 2014) in 2014, which calls for action to eradicate the issues of human trafficking and child labour (African Union 2021).

As a member of the UN, the DRC is devoted to these goals by embracing the UN Resolution 72/327, which proclaims the year of 2021 to be the "International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour". In that sense, it urges the global community to find measures to tackle the obstacles posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and work towards successfully implementing the SDGs (ILO 2022a).

According to Miss Ndusi Ntembe, Minister of Employment, Labour and Social welfare of the DRC, on her contribution to the High-level Dialogue for Action on Child Labour in June of 2021 - an event which united child protection experts of the EU, UNICEF and ILO to mark the World Day against Child Labour - the DRC has pledged to become a pioneer country of the Alliance 8.7, so as to accelerate the process of reducing child labour worldwide (ILO 2021a).

**Table 3:** Overview of Child Labour in the DRC's Artisanal Cobalt Mines

| | **Synopsis of the situation** | | **Response** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Causes** | • Chronic poverty, intensified by the two Congo wars (1996-2003) and subsequent economic and political crises. 60% of households depend on ASM as their main source of income<br>• Mismanagement of artisanal mining zones (ZEA's) created by the government, resulting in the unauthorised flow of miners into industrial sites and/or illegal artisanal mining sites<br>• Improper allocation of funds to promote the socio-economic development of mining communities<br>• Armed conflict and illegal involvement of military forces in mining sites, lack of transparent documentation on exported goods and illegitimate subcontracting, all of which are traceable to the high levels of corruption in the country | **National** | • Adoption of the *Child Protection Code* (2009)<br>• Creation of government agencies for child protection<br>• Establishment of the *Assistance and Supervision Service for Small-Scale Mining* responsible for monitoring ASM<br>• **2012:** Enforcement of laws (DRC 2012a) demanding all mineral trading companies obey to the OECD Due Diligence Framework<br>• **2019:** Implementation of the *Education Sector Recovery Support Project* + Establishment of the *Entreprise Générale du Cobalt* (EGC)<br>• **2020:** President Tshisekedi promoted measures to increase funding for public schools and endorsed the construction of new schools<br>• Adoption of several action plans, such as the *National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour* (2012–2025) and the *Child Soldiers Action Plan* |
| **Consequences** | • Hazardous working conditions (exposure to toxic chemicals, lack of protective equipment, long working hours in harsh environments)<br>• Long-term physical damage (lung diseases, cancer, infertility, chronic backpain, among others)<br>• Detrimental phycological effects (depression and trauma)<br>• Long-term negative effects for societies (lack of future prospects, unemployment)<br>• Risk of forced labour, extortion, prostitution, human trafficking, violence and crime<br>• By violating several types of security, child labour generates human insecurity in the region | **International** | • As a member of the African Union, the DRC has adopted both the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* (1981) and the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* (1990)<br>• As a member of the United Nations, the DRC has ratified the most relevant international human rights treaties, such as the CRC (1989) and both ILO Conventions no. 138 (ILO 1973) and no. 182 (ILO 1999)<br>• **2014:** The DRC became a member of the EITI, in order to improve traceability of raw materials in the country<br>• **2020:** The African Union and its members adopted the "Ten Year Action Plan to Eradicate Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery (2020-2030)"<br><br>• The DRC has embraced the UN Resolution 72/327, which defines the year of 2021 as the "International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour" and urges the global community to achieve the UN SDG's |
| **Pervasiveness** | • Increased global demand for raw materials, including cobalt<br>• Low birth registration rates<br>• Poor regulation of unofficial artisanal mining areas<br>• Few to no qualifications needed to work in these mines<br>• Poor employment opportunities and low salaries<br>• Lack of social protection systems and adequate healthcare<br>• Intricate global trading network complicates the traceability of cobalt<br>• The Covid-19 pandemic augmented the risk of entering child labour (school closure, increased unemployment, and economic hardship) | | |

Looking back at the research question posed at the beginning of this chapter - How does child labour in the DRC pose a threat to HS? - it is instructive to consider the following:

Based on the UN Human Development Report (UNDP 1994) and the UN Human Security Unit (HSU), providing HS means protecting the fundamental freedoms of all. As a highly multifaceted concept, HS includes anything that could be defined as a threat to the individual's freedom to live life to its full potential. Bearing this in mind, child labour:

> [...] by its own definition, is something that removes the freedom of children to live a life that isn't restricted and isn't going to endanger them [...] it's an oxymoron, the two things [child labour and human security] are complete opposites by definition [...] (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

To ensure the HS of a population, a wide array of elements must be considered. These range from food security, health security, economic security, to name but a few. As a cause and consequence of poverty, child labour deprives children of an education and decent future working opportunities, thus damaging not only the child's development, but the economic prosperity of the State affected by it. Therefore, child labour undermines the economic security of children, their parents and communities, as well as their future adult selves (Humbert 2009).

Another essential aspect to HS is the environment. Child labour, in its worst forms, often involves mining operations, mass deforestation or work in the agricultural sector, which implies the use of huge amounts of harmful pesticides and other toxic chemicals. These activities are not only detrimental to children, but to local communities and the general environment as well. Exposure to toxic substances and subsequent pollution of nearby land and rivers poses a threat to environmental security, as well as health security.

In the case of child labour in ASM, unsafe and unfair working conditions represent human rights abuses, which are embraced under political security. Additionally, corruption and other political realities in the DRC play a major role in the level of HS perceived in the country. Despite having ratified all international treaties on child labour and introduced relevant legislation at the national level, the implementation of child protection laws remains weak. This is due to a lack of mechanisms and institutions to support those laws (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

In this sense, the political and personal security of Congolese children is also endangered:

> [...] Children don't realise the agency they have, they don't realise their situation is illegal, both in the eyes of the international community but also in terms of their own country's legislation and that takes away from their human security, as well (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

That being said, child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines is in direct breach of 5 (economic, environmental, health, political and personal security) of the 7 types of security encompassed by the UNDP Report (UNDP 1994). However, insecurities are all interconnected. The phenomenon itself may not cause food insecurity, but as a direct result of poverty, child labour in the country is often driven by hunger, and by perpetuating chronic poverty it can, ultimately, exacerbate food insecurity for children themselves and future generations alike. The same goes for community security, for child labour may not directly threaten the community, but by perpetuating environmental, political and economic instability, eventually consequences take their toll on the community as a whole. As such, child labour in the DRC poses a direct threat to HS in all of its forms.

In the context of the 5th Global Conference on Child Labour, South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, reiterates this notion:

> We are here because we share a common conviction that child labour in all its facets is an enemy. Child labour is an enemy of our children's development and an enemy of progress (UN 2022).

## Final Considerations

As of 2020, 160 million children were engaged in child labour across the globe, an estimated 35 000 of which work in artisanal mining in the DRC (Kara 2018). The country's fragile political situation, pervasive poverty, deep-seated corruption, and poor employment opportunities drive thousands of families to the mining sector. Notorious for its lack of supervision and degrading working conditions, artisanal mining harbours most illegally employed children, commonly sent by their families in attempts to alleviate economic hardship.

The detrimental effects of child labour stretch across more than the child's physical and mental development. This practice not only perpetuates a cycle of chronic poverty and insecurity in mining communities, but also reverberates across the country's entire economy, by limiting children's opportunities for education and overall prospects.

Considerable measures have been designed to counter the issue, however, the struggle to efficiently enforce and implement them remains. Despite comprehensive legal foundations, the Congolese government lacks human and financial resources to put its laws and regulations into motion. Further hindering the implementation of measures, are the challenges created by the global pandemic. School closure and rising unemployment rates have pushed more children into poverty and, accordingly, prompted their involvement in the mining sector.

This chapter has served to contextualise the issue of child labour within the DRC, by exploring its primary triggers and consequences, as well as the factors which have led to its perseverance in the country. By providing a more profound understanding of the precarious conditions of mining communities and their dependency on cobalt mining, as well as the intricacy of cobalt supply chains, this section has aimed to shed light onto the hurdles, which must be surpassed to achieve the overall reduction of child labour.

To further deepen this awareness, the Congolese legal frameworks on mining and child protection have been reviewed, and government efforts to moderate the occurrence of child labour taken into consideration. As a member of the African Union and the United Nations, the DRC is committed both at the continental and the international levels to achieving Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals to accelerate the elimination of child labour worldwide.

In addition, the conclusions drawn from this chapter have served to reiterate the notion that child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines constitutes a direct threat to HS, as it directly violates all elements of security embraced by the concept.

Having clarified the child labour situation in the DRC, the following chapter will contemplate the roles of both the UN and the EU in the promotion of human rights and evaluate their journeys as HS promoters, so as to lay the basis for further research on their contributions to child labour reduction.

# CHAPTER III. THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION AS PROMOTERS OF HUMAN SECURITY

Following an exhaustive review of the child labour practice with a focus on the DRC as case study, the present chapter will delve into the roles of the UN and the EU as global security providers. In this sense, it intends to illustrate the endeavours of these organisations in the promotion of human rights and HS across the globe. In assessing the journeys of each individual actor in the advancement of HS, as well as its incorporation into their inner activities, this section sets the foundation for further research apropos their efforts to reduce child labour from a humancentric perspective.

From tracing the early stages of each organisation and their establishment in the international sphere, to contemplating their efforts in the propagation of universal human rights and the institution of a global security policy concerned with the individual, this chapter aims to address the following questions: What significance do human rights hold and how are they promoted within these organisations? How has the HS concept progressed within each organisation? To which extent has it been instilled within these systems?

To assist in this effort, a brief outline of some of the most relevant security documents produced by the UN and the EU will be sketched, whereby the prevalence of HS - including that of its inherent principals - will be considered. A few of these documents will be reassessed in the last chapter, where they will be interpreted and compared via thematic analysis.

## 3.1 The United Nations: Advancing Human Rights and a One-Size-Fits-All Human Security?

Established after World War II, the UN's primary objective is to maintain international peace and security. In doing so, it has become a vital actor in the promotion of human rights and HS on the global stage. This subsection aims to reflect upon the evolution of human rights within the UN system and determine the extent to which the concept of HS has permeated the organisation's functioning.

For this purpose, it contemplates the creation of mechanisms, such as the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTHS) and the Human Security Unit (HSU), and essential documents, like the General Assembly resolutions A/64/291, A/66/290 and A/66/763 on HS. In addition, despite not reflecting the official position of the UN, a number of reports, such as *Human Security Now* (2003) and *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (2004) will be considered.

*Promoting Human Rights since 1945*

In 1945, as a response to the indescribable human suffering caused during the Second World War, the UN was instituted with the core purpose of sustaining international peace and security. By collaborating in the resolution of international issues and in the promotion of human rights, the organisation aims to foster cordial relations among States and, ultimately, serve as a centre for nations to synchronise their efforts (Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014; MacFarlane and Khong 2006).

The UN originated as a fusion of States, which, upon joining as members of the organisation, agreed to follow the principles of international relations set out by the United Nations Charter (UN 1945), the UN's founding document and legal compass. Despite having been created by States for States, the UN's Charter accentuates the significance of supporting the needs and wants of States, just as much as those of its peoples (Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014), a notion clearly expressed in the document's preamble:

> We the peoples of the United Nations [are] determined [...] to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small (UN 1945, 2).

In hope of ensuring the universality of human rights and averting their violations across the world, in 1946 the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) was established under the UN Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC), as a technical body responsible for the advancement of human rights. As the primary policy-making body of the UN, the UNCHR monitors human rights issues worldwide, to develop international norms and guiding principles (Pathak 2009; Sarwar 2007).

Under this premise, in 1948 the UNCHR drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), through which the vague mention of human rights in the UN Charter was conceded authoritative weight. This declaration was later considered the first international document to formalise the notion that underpins a person's inherent dignity (Pathak 2009; Sarwar 2007).

The evolution of human rights, as more than a theoretical concept, is closely tied to UN leadership, as it was the Universal Declaration, which personified international consensus and integrated human rights into legal terms (Thakur 1999). In 1976, both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) entered into force and constitute, together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Bill of Human Rights (Thakur 1999).

Thereby not only did they strengthen the Universal Declaration but expand the conception of human rights to include socio-economic and cultural rights, in addition to the traditional civil and political rights (Thakur 1999). Since then, many other human rights instruments have been adopted by the agency to protect and promote these values (Newman and Richmond 2001).

As the political landscape of the Cold War era shifted, so did the UN's role as provider of international peace and security. As its signature tool, peace operations during the Cold War were based upon the Charter's mandate, which envisioned the creation of a UN force, whose primary objective was to act as pacifier following a ceasefire between parties. Adopted from its predecessor, the League of Nations, the UN's peace operations were designed to operate as a last case response to hostility between States. In doing so, the UN relied on the assistance of its own members to promote the constrained ideal of security rooted in territorial defence and sovereignty (Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014).

The UN's first missions rested upon the principal of impartiality, which allowed for the deployment of minimally armed troops, usually from UN Member States, into warring countries (Gama 2009). However, this force was to only take action with the permission of the host nation (Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014). Thus, for years UN peace operations were bound by the ideals of neutrality, State consent and the use of minimal force.

Although immediately after World War II, the UN's emphasis lied on reconstruction and short-term humanitarian assistance, the process of decolonisation during the 1960's inspired changes within the UN's operations, as a growing need to assist newly independent nations materialised (Larres and Wittlinger 2020). As imperial powers began to crumble and fall, the right to independence and freedom from dominance became part of the UN's political ambitions, paving the way for the interweaving of security and development (Gama 2009).

After the end of the Cold War, a new type of peacekeeping made its debut, commonly known as "multidimensional peacebuilding", which was more likely to use its power to achieve its goals. In light of this development, in 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then Secretary-General of the UN, designed *An Agenda for Peace* (1992), a report known for having spurred significant institutional reform and prompted the UN's involvement in the propagation of a HS framework (Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014; Gama 2009).

In response, in 1993, the General Assembly created the post of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, which served to reinforce the UN human rights system (Pathak 2009). In 1994, the UN assumed a broader agenda, when it devised a new conceptual and practical framework to justify its peace operations through the UNDP (1994), which envisioned a human-centered approach to development issues (Gama 2009).

In stark contrast to the previously maintained focus on State sovereignty, by the mid 1990's the notion of security had extended to include rights, such as the right to shelter, food, water and healthcare, so that the violation of the individuals' rights began to be viewed as a cause for disruption at the international level. The ideals of international peace and security now encompassed much more than mere "aggression between States" (Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014, 322), rather they regarded the lack of basic provisions, poverty and discrimination as threats to global peace.

The shortcomings of several humanitarian operations in the late 90s reiterated the fact that classical intervention could no longer respond to crisis in the new security environment (Newman and Richmond 2001). An example of this are refugee flows, which stem from armed conflict, but most importantly from deep-seated issues like corruption, discrimination and inequality. Accordingly, the root causes of forced migration must be addressed, not only the after-effects (Newman and Richmond 2001).

Subsequently, during this period, UN peace operations deepened their original purpose by adopting a more proactive stance (Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014; Gama 2009). Today, UN missions play an active role in monitoring and preventing human rights violations on the field and, ultimately, in countering human insecurity. In order to do so, they depend on official mandates from the Security Council, the Secretary-General for locating proper resources for the operations and the General Assembly for securing the mission's funding (Gama 2009).

Throughout the decades, new tendencies rose to further enforce social and economic development in the UN's endeavours to promote global peace. The adoption of Country Strategy Notes, as well as the allocation of UN field level officers, became symbols for reform when it comes the UN's advancements in social progress. These notes include reports of the overall development situation in specific countries, in order to develop adequate strategies and plans to address issues in these particular regions (Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014).

The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS 1999), for instance, has implemented hundreds of projects, which aim to maintain HS in vulnerable communities around the globe, by taking action in the fields of migration, climate change, poverty, inequality, health, among others. Similarly, under the aegis of the Millennium Summit, in 2000 the General Assembly designed the Millennium Development Goals, a set of quantifiable goals, targeting the promotion of universal primary education, the reduction of people living in extreme poverty (less than 1 dollar per day), as well as the prevention of spreadable diseases, such as malaria and HIV/AIDS (Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014).

Just as significant was the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, first introduced by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan's *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (UN 2004),

which served to reinforce the perception of human rights, development, and security as interconnected, later reiterated in his report *In Larger Freedoms* from 2005 (UN, General Assembly 2005a).

Despite such developments, the rudiments of State sovereignty and non-intervention retain their importance vis-à-vis the UN's external action. While keeping the traditional maxim of equal States, who are subject to no higher jurisdiction than themselves in the eyes of international law, in the context of resolution A/RES/60/1, outcome of the 2005 World Summit, the General Assembly rehashed that, according to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, in the event of failure from national authorities to prevent crimes against humanity among their populations, the UN Security Council is equipped to take action (UN, General Assembly 2005b, paras 138 and 139).

This reasoning is reflective of the principle of "Responsibility to Protect" portrayed in the 2001 report (ICISS 2001) of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (Thérien 2012). However, the application of UN resolution A/RES/60/1 (UN, General Assembly 2005b) has remained limited in warranting interventions, as witnessed in the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the Iraq War in 2003, both of which lacked proper mandates for action (Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2014).

In 2006, the Commission on Human Rights was superseded by a new body, the Human Rights Council, and urged by the General Assembly to create a Universal Periodic Review, the purpose of which is to achieve the universal submission of a rigorous national review on the human rights situation, making it the sole human rights instrument to ever achieve such widespread engagement (Al Hussein 2016).

Today, the promotion of human rights is highly dependent on individual's perspectives and direct assistance on the ground. Therefore, constructive dialogue with victims becomes crucial, as it is through such approaches that UN experts are able to recommend preemptive measures to guarantee that human rights abuses do not repeat themselves. These recommendations are then considered by civil society groups worldwide who advocate for change in the areas that need it (Al Hussein 2016).

Maintaining its role as human rights advocate has not always been an easy task for the UN. As the recent refugee crisis has demonstrated, reaching international consensus on specific concerns regarding the preservation of human rights remains challenging (Bellamy 2021). As populism gains increasingly more presence in national debates, homophobic discourse and laws are promulgated, and child and women's rights violated, meaningful and coherent discussions on addressing these common challenges is all too frequently supplanted by the revision of political stances (Al Hussein 2016; Bellamy 2021).

Despite significant advancements, as of 2015, the original target date of the MDG's, development issues remained in several parts of the world (Larres and Wittlinger 2020). This prompted the General

Assembly to design a sequel to these goals, reflected in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), adopted, in September 2015, in the context of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

*Fostering a Human Security based on Freedom from Want*

Although never explicitly referenced until the release of the UNDP in 1994, the ideals of HS have percolated the UN's security discourse long before that. The 1980 report by former Chancellor of West Germany, Willy Brandt, best known as the Brandt Report (ICIDI 1980), stands out as an example of this.

To date considered one of the most thorough critiques of the worlds' socio-economic disparities, the report highlights inequalities between North and South and proposes concrete strategies to tackle global poverty. Therefore, the Brandt Report significantly contributed to advancing the notion of what would later be coined "Human Security" (Thérien 2012).

This is also true for the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Report, which introduced the understanding of global sustainable development into the international agenda. Published in 1987 the Brundtland Report, entitled "Our Common Future" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987), announced the concept of intergenerational equity, as well as three pillars of sustainability, namely, environmental, economic and social sustainability, as indispensable to global security. Therewith the report recommended a major rethinking of traditional security (Thérien 2012).

As a result, the UN post-Cold War discourse mainly focused on restructuring the old concept of security, by integrating the concern for the individual's wellbeing beyond military threats. Both former Secretary-Generals Kofi Annan (UN General Assembly 2005a) and Ban Ki-moon (UN General Assembly 2010a) were active in promoting the urgency to expand the paradigm of security.

It was Boutros Boutros-Ghali's 1992 report, *An Agenda for Peace* (Boutros-Ghali 1992), which reassessed the UN's position in the evolving post-Cold War security environment, and underlined the importance of monitoring and prevention, as well as the protection of human rights, in the maintenance of long-term peace and stability (Thérien 2012; Owen 2008).

Recurring civil conflict in the early 1990's revealed the need to adopt new approaches to security, such as preventive diplomacy and innovative forms of peacekeeping, as well as multilateral cooperation by a wide array of actors, a lighter endeavour in the absence of Cold War ideologies. The demise of the USSR (Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics) signaled the end of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Accordingly, the fear of nuclear war between the superpowers subsided, so that the UN could redirect its attention from military defence to socio-economic affairs (Kristen 2004).

The term "Human Security" is first officially mentioned in the 1994 UNDP report *New Dimensions of Human Security* (UN 1994), which clearly defined the concept, as well as its threats, and provided guidelines for policy action in the field (Owen 2008). Among other things, the UNDP contributed to the positioning of HS as the primary moral impetus of the UN's global security initiatives:

> For too long, security has been equated with the threats to a country's borders. [...] For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event (UN 1994, 3).

From this point onward, the concept's people-centered nature begins to permeate several other relevant reports, substantially extending the ideals of international peace and security to much more than the stillness of arms. Despite initial controversy from Member States, which held the notion of HS as a threat to the principles of State sovereignty and non-intervention, the UN began to gradually expand its protection mandate, thus ensuring that the main tenets of HS were incorporated into its architectural structure (Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko and Messineo 2012).

In the 1995 report *Our Global Neighborhood* (Commission on Global Governance 1995), the Commission clearly adopts a broad HS discourse, based upon the notion of sustainable development, environmental integrity, and individual security. This vision of HS was additionally embraced in the 1999 Millennium Declaration, in light of which Kofi Annan advocated for the international adoption of the concept's main ambitions "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" (UN 2009), as well as in the 2003 report *Human Security Now* (CHS 2003), presented to Annan by the CHS.

In March 1999, the UNTHS was instituted with the support of the Japanese Government, in order to fund the UN's HS projects, as well as improve the concept's operationalisation. To date, the fund has acted in more than 85 countries across the globe, deploying over 200 projects in the areas of poverty, disaster resilience, peacebuilding, among others. Hereby, the UNTFHS has assumed a paramount role in putting forth the HS strategy, and considerably enhanced the HS situation in many regions (UN 2014).

The HSU, created in 2004, assists the UNTFHS through public awareness campaigns and cultivating partnerships with NGOs, governments, and civil society groups, for instance (UN 2014). Tasked with instituting the broad notion of HS throughout the UN, the HSU unveils the UN's efforts to fully incorporate HS into its structure. However, this ambition is subject to certain restrictions, such as the lack of consensus among the UN's members on what truly constitutes HS (Thérien 2012).

That being said, one of the main criticisms of HS as a policy framework derives from its potential for ambiguity. This becomes evident through Kofi Annan's report from 2000: *We the Peoples* (Annan

2000). The document exemplifies the possibility of conceptual vagueness between HS's broad vs narrow approach, as the former Secretary-General proceeds to ascribe HS concerns to its tangible threats, as perceived by the narrow approach of the term.

In response to this report, in 2001, the CHS was established and charged with promoting the recognition and understanding of the HS concept, as well as aid in its practical application (UN 2009). Criticism regarding the blurred definition of HS impelled the CHS to publish the report *Human Security Now* (CHS 2003), which not only delivered an exhaustive definition of HS deeply seated in sustainable human development but set out to incorporate aspects of freedom from fear - such as imminent threats to survival - as well as the right to freedom, human dignity, and empowerment, thus underpinning the notion of reciprocity between national and human security (CHS 2003).

The complementarity between different types of security is further encompassed in the 2004 report *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (UN 2004) produced by Annan's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Hereby, the UN's commitments and achievements in strengthening the ideal of HS are clearly portrayed. Additionally, the report presents the idea that direct threats such as civil conflict, organised crime and violence are interwoven with aspects of socio-economic wealth, under the umbrella of HS (UN 2009), thus shedding light onto the inherent link between development and security.

Likewise, within the context of the 2005 report *In Larger Freedoms: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All* (UN General Assembly 2005a), although rarely referencing the term itself, Kofi Annan suggests a set of reforms at the policy and institutional levels, necessary to attain the three dimensions contemplated by HS: "freedom from fear", "freedom from want" and "freedom from indignity." By acknowledging the interdependent nature of the contemporary security environment, the report commends a multisectoral approach, which the merging of the abovementioned freedoms can provide (Owen 2008; UN 2009; UN 2014).

The General Assembly's adoption of the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document (UN General Assembly 2005b) played a vital role in disseminating the HS concept. The publication stresses the need to ensure that every individual be given equal opportunities, and a life lived to its fullest potential, as contemplated by HS's notions of freedom (Owen 2008; UN 2009; UN 2014).

Furthermore, the outcome document proposes "Responsibility to Protect" as a guiding principle to the UN's external action regarding heinous crimes. This suggestion symbolises a shift in the UN's role as security provider, by granting it the power to interfere in States' internal affairs to promote international peace and stability (Owen 2008). In 2006, resolution 1674 on R2P (UN Security Council 2006), reiterated

the international community's assistance on the matter and provided the UN with a legal tool to react to blatant abuses of international humanitarian law during conflict (Thérien 2012).

Discussions on the practical implementation of the HS approach in the UN persisted, as in March of 2010, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon released his first HS report (A/64/701), which proposed concrete strategies to enhance the presence of the concept in the UN's field of action (UN General Assembly 2010a). In July of the same year, the General Assembly acknowledged efforts to operationalise HS, underlining the need to continue discussions, in order to reach consensus on the meaning of the concept (A/64/291) (UN General Assembly 2010b).

Pursuant of this, in April of 2012, Ban Ki-Moon submitted a report (A/66/763) (UN General Assembly 2012b) to the General Assembly, which included the position of Member States on the notion HS and a potential definition thereof. Finally, in September of 2012, the General Assembly divulged, through resolution A/66/290 (UN General Assembly 2012a), that Member States had reached consensus on the meaning of HS.

Viewed as a groundbreaking accomplishment, this resolution enabled the framework for the practicability of the concept of HS within the UN system (UN 2014), and clearly signified the UN's efforts in conceptualising the term. According to the resolution, HS has been defined, among other things, as "[...] an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people." (UN General Assembly 2012a, 1), clearly capturing the broad notion of the term.

The HSU has played a unique role in promoting HS as a universal tool to attend to evolving threats in our modern world. Through a set of strategic plans covering the years between 2014 and 2017 (UN 2014), 2018 to 2021 and, most recently, 2022 to 2025, the HSU has strived to advance the concept as a practical framework, rested upon five fundamental principles: people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific, prevention-oriented, and emphasis on protection and empowerment (UN 2014).

By uniting the agendas of peace and security, development and human rights, HS, as a policy approach, can assist international entities to assess a wider range of complex and multilayered issues, which cannot be successfully targeted by separate, limited initiatives (UN 2016). The framework's ability for a context-specific and comprehensive approach to arising challenges will prove particularly useful in supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the most recent initiative by the HSU, in collaboration with the World Academy of Arts and Human Security and other partners, to launch a global campaign aimed at promoting "Human Security for All" (WAAS n.d.).

Further enhancing the UN's promotion of HS is the Human Security Handbook of 2016 (UN 2016), which emphasises the concept's added values and delivers guidance on how to fully implement the framework into the UN system. Likewise, the UN's latest report "New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene" (UNDP 2022), published February this year, supports the expansion of the HS approach. In doing so, the report argues for the inclusion of solidarity as a third HS strategy, aside from protection and empowerment to deal with a new generation of threats triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, which have led to the first decline of human development indicators, thereby increasing human insecurity at a global level.

### 3.2 The European Union: Advancing Human Rights and Half-Hearted Human Security?

Since its foundation, the EU has transitioned from a purely economic to a security actor (Brandão 2010; Douglas-Scott 2011; Kirchner and Sperlin 2007). Today, the Union portrays an increasingly meaningful role in its quest for global peace and stability, evident in the growing number of activities and operations it deploys. Its active engagement in the promotion of global human rights and democracy has placed it closer to actors such as the UN, universally recognised as HS advocate. Through close cooperation with this entity, the EU has gained increased representation in the international sphere, particularly in security affairs.

However, its reputation as security actor has not remained unharmed, particularly due to inconsistencies within the Union itself. Seeking to improve understanding on this development, this subsection probes the ways, in which human rights have been broadcast throughout the years, as well as deliberate whether, even if only implicitly, the EU's activities have been consistent with the main pillars of HS.

Thereby, this section provides a brief look into relevant documents - such as the European Security Strategies, and the Barcelona Report, which albeit not produced by the EU, will support this chapter's attempt to assess the propagation of a common HS approach for the Union.

*From Economic Growth to Human Rights and Democracy*

Originally thought as a project for economic integration and stability, the EU's engagement in human rights concerns has traced a long path, for more than fifty years, from its inception under the revision of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 as a restricted economic community, to an international political

force, for which mainstreaming human rights and democracy in its external action has become a high priority.

Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, scholars in the fields of International Relations and Political Science have attempted to conceptualise the EU as an international actor. The ideals of human rights, peace, and democracy, which have been ingrained in the European project since its foundation, have informed these academic attempts to define its role in the international arena. Ian Manners (2002), for instance, has long contended that the EU is a "normative power". As such, it diffuses its norms through exemplary leadership, rather than the coercive methods used by conventional military powers. In that same line of thought, the EU has also been described as "model power" (Ferreira-Pereira 2012; Miliband 2007) and "external governance" (Lavenex 2004; Lavenex 2015), for its commitment to project its normative power abroad.

However, the EU's legitimacy in the promotion of human rights has not remained unscathed, having faced some criticism particularly regarding disparities in the application of human rights instruments, inconsistencies among the organisation's internal and external dimensions, as well as a divided legal framework (Douglas-Scott 2011; Velluti 2016).

The entity's strong ties to a common market, free trade and regulation have hampered its definition as a human rights organisation. In fact, despite Article 2 of the Treaty of the EU (TEU) (1992) (EU 2012), which maintains that the EU is built upon the respect for human rights, human rights themselves were not a matter of high precedence within the former European Economic Community (EEC), primarily driven by economic ambitions (Douglas-Scott 2011). Such aspirations steered the EEC away from ever making reference to human rights (De Búrca 2011; Douglas-Scott 2011; Velluti 2016).

Nonetheless, the EU has moved a long way from the ambitions of a single market and consistently reasserted itself as human rights promoter in the international sphere. Its fundamental rights and freedoms became known to the world in 2000, when the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (EC 2000b) was decreed in Nice. Nine years later, in light of the Treaty of Lisbon (EU 2007), the Charter gained legally binding status, compelling the EU and its Member States to comply with the principles defended by it, when implementing EU law.

Aside from provisions to respect fundamental rights, the Treaty of Lisbon sets out the obligation of conforming with the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) (Council of Europe 1950) and of human rights to be promoted in the EU's external action. Adjustments introduced by the treaty played an essential role in the EU's assertion as international human rights

advocate and served to ensure that its internal and exterior policies were synchronised (Council of the EU 2022a).

However, the Charter's hereby acquired normative force does not indicate that the EU's values were overlooked until then. In fact, fundamental rights were given precedence through Article 6 of the TEU as "general principles of the Union's law" (EU 2012, 19), as well as through Article 7, through which the EU's Member States may have their rights revoked when violating the fundamental rights outlined in Article 2 (Douglas-Scott 2011).

In spite of these advancements, it is of essence to clarify that the EU's journey in promoting fundamental rights has not always been clear and uncomplicated. The shortcomings of the EU Charter provide a vivid example of this. Despite having occupied an essential role in enhancing the EU's credibility as human rights agency, the document is not a stand-alone Charter of rights; instead, it solely relates to EU legislation, as indicated in Article 51, Paragraph 1: "The provisions of this Charter are addressed to the institutions and bodies of the Union with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity and to the Member States only when they are implementing Union law. [...]" (EC 2000b, 21). Hereby, the Charter does not establish a unilateral human rights jurisdiction for the EU, as it is only applicable to its agencies and Member States within the scope of EU law.

As previously mentioned, it was the Treaty of Lisbon, which proclaimed the EU's duty to agree to the ECHR (EU 2007):

> Fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, shall constitute general principles of the Union's law. (Article 6, Paragraph 3 of the Lisbon Treaty).

This was mainly justified by the interest to guarantee that the EU and its members are bound by the same principles and rules (Council of the EU 2022a). The issue which arises from this rests within the convention's limited scope in terms of human rights. The convention's primary focus on civil and political rights, suggests that the human rights reflected within the EU's "general principals of law" may be neglecting economic, social and cultural rights altogether (UNHROHC, Europe Regional Office n.d.).

The EU Charter differs from the Convention in this sense, as it takes both civil and political rights, as well as economic and social rights under its wing. However, it does not embrace all rights considered by most UN human rights conventions, thus risking the establishment of a system which is discordant with the universality of human rights (UNHROHC, Europe Regional Office n.d.).

Additionally, there still exists no universal conceptual understanding of the rights defended under the entity or clear reference to how they should be applied in its external trade policy (Velluti 2016). As brought to the foreground by Velluti (2016), such disparities become evident in Articles 3(5) and 21(1) of the TEU, in which economic and social rights are held as a matter of law to be applied to all foreign trade relationships, while other provisions, such as Article 34 of the EU Charter relating to social security are viewed as a general goal. In a similar vein, Article 28 of the Charter on collective bargaining is portrayed as guiding principle to be practiced independently by Member States (Velluti 2016).

Nevertheless, throughout the years the EU has managed to extend its scope of action and reinvent its image from a mere economic and political institution to one capable of fostering diplomatic relations and human rights worldwide. Through a considerable budget for foreign aid, the EU has substantial commercial leverage, which can be used to promote its core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (EC 2001).

This leverage is reinforced through human rights provisions and import restrictions developed for the EU's external trade policy, for instance (Zamfir 2019a). The respect for human rights and democracy plays a pivotal role in designing trade agreements and treaties, which must comply with the EU's definition of human rights as portrayed in the EU Charter (Council of the EU 2022a). In accordance, with the human rights clauses built into the EU's bilateral trade agreements, if human rights are violated, the parties of an agreement are authorised to suspend it (Zamfir 2019a).

The Cotonou Trade Agreement[22] (EC 2010), for instance, signifies a momentous leap forward in the evolution of the EU's human rights regulations. Established in 2000, in the context of the African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) – EU Partnership, this agreement is rooted in the protection of human rights, the rule of law, good governance and the safeguarding of democratic values (EC 2001). Based on its article 96, in 2010, the Council of the EU discontinued development assistance to Zimbabwe (Zamfir 2019a).

In addition to the humanitarian aid delivered by the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), the EU has developed several foreign assistance programmes, such as "Phare", "MEDA" and "CARDS", focused on improving the respect for human rights, democracy and sustainable development abroad. Predominantly rooted in fighting the causes of poverty, the European Community's Development Policy (Council of the EU and EC 2000a), for instance, aims to advance social and human development through capacity-building and empowerment (EC 2001).

[22] Envisioned to expire on the 29th of February 2020, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement was extended to allow negotiations on the new ACP-EU Partnership Agreement (EC 2020b).

Additionally, within the European Council, the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM), a dedicated human rights body, is responsible for maintaining foreign relations linked to aspects of human rights. Introduced in 2007, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) sets out to gather and analyse data, in order to provide comparative studies on human rights concerns and, accordingly, alerts EU members and their institutions about breeches of human rights and presents potential solutions to them (Lerch 2021; UNHROHC, Europe Regional Office n.d). The adoption of such instruments has elevated the EU's ability to act as global human rights defender and ensured its human rights expertise.

Efforts of the EU within the domain of human rights are primarily guided by the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024) (EU 2020), which was agreed in 2020 (Council of the EU 2022a). This plan serves as a blueprint for the EU to fully incorporate human rights into its external action in partner countries by designing criteria to implement the recognition of human rights within trade agreements. Its main areas of action are the protection and empowerment of individuals, and cooperation with a focus on resilience and sustainable development (EEAS 2021a).

The same year, the EU took a step further in its pursuit of upholding the indivisibility and universality of human rights with the institution of a global human rights sanctions regime (Council of the EU 2022a). As such, the EU is now able to penalise private citizens, corporations and organisations linked to severe human rights abuses irrespective of their location. Entities and individuals across the globe will be held accountable for their actions through travel prohibitions, freezing and rejection of funds, among others (Council of the EU 2022a).

This development confirms the EU's newfound capacity to take measures to punish perpetrators of human rights violations. Yet another catalyst for the EU's promotion of human rights is its influence in the field of business. Through its efforts in campaigning responsible business conduct and integrating the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the EU is dedicated to promoting human rights within its trade action and recommending solutions to human rights abuses provoked by activities in the area (EEAS 2021b).

Similarly, the organisation has adopted compulsory measures on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence with the aim of compelling corporations to address and alleviate impacts to human rights and the environment caused by their activities across several business sectors (EEAS 2021b).

*Fostering a "Human Security" based on Freedom from Fear*

The post-Cold War period spurred momentous changes within international politics, the most significant of which was the transition from a bipolar world order to a multipolar system. In light of this shift, the EU was faced with the imperative need to play an active role in building a new international order and institute its own security system: a global security policy rooted in the individuals' safety.

Events such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks proved the transnational character of the insecurities pervading the post-cold war era and reiterated the importance of a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to security, which combines different policies and tools. Following this line of reasoning, national borders can no longer contain the broad spectrum of threats facing the new century, covering phenomena as varied as environmental degradation, cyberattacks, transnational terrorism and organised crime. As declared by former High-Representative Javier Solana:

> [...] The notion of human security – which puts the security of individuals front and centre – is fast gaining ground, and rightly so. The fact that borders are increasingly open, or irrelevant, to vast flows of goods, people and ideas has brought great opportunities, prosperity and freedom to many. But globalisation has equally created a sense of injustice and frustration – and it has increased our dependence and vulnerability on events far afield (Solana 2005).

European leaders' perception on the severity and scope of terrorism in Europe and the urgency to deepen cooperation in the field was heightened after the 2004 attacks in Madrid and the following year after the London bombings (Magalhães 2016). The beginning of the 21st century thus became a promising stage in the EU's political and security evolution, particularly as European governments began to push for a legal framework, which would grant the EU a more proactive role in the international sphere.

As a result, it was through the Treaty of Lisbon (EU 2007), signed by the Member States in 2007, that the EU acquired legal identity conceding it the ability to sign treaties and obtain increased external representation. The EU's narrative on a comprehensive approach emerges from this growing realisation and has been applied to a vast array of symbiotic security threats, such as human trafficking, piracy and forced migration, thereby aiding in the organisation's assertion as a cohesive and autonomous global security actor (Brandão 2016). Through this multi-functional, holistic approach the Union has expanded its field of action to include the areas of security, defence and justice, and disintegrated the traditional State model by blurring the lines between its external and internal security dimensions.

The 1998 St. Malo declaration sparked the rapid development of the EU's security actorness (Matlary 2008), by advancing the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), later renamed Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Against this backdrop, since 2003 the EU has acquired capacity for autonomous decision making in international peace and security matters, having deployed several (civilian) missions and (military) operations under the CSDP. These initiatives have fundamentally changed the EU's external capacity allowing it to progress from a security consumer, generated by the US and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), to a security provider (Kurowska 2007).

To convey the image of a consistent and united block, with capability and know-how to combat emerging threats on European Security, in 2003, the EU launched the European Security Strategy – *A Secure Europe in a Better World* (ESS) (Council of the EU 2003), which envisioned a unique and multifunctional role for the EU as security actor by reiterating the urgency to view threats through a global lens and address them in a holistic manner (Christou 2014; Martin 2007; Larsen 2019).

This strategy is, thus, the most notable example of the preliminary foundation of the Union's HS approach, particularly because it acknowledges that security is a requirement for development (Xavier 2010). The ESS does not clearly reference HS however it portrays the Union as a community that creates and upholds standards and values both locally and globally. Noteworthy is also the acknowledgment that threats such as regional conflicts and terrorism are frequently derived from poverty, sickness, and illiteracy, which then again produce insecurity (Christou 2014).

While the UN can be seen as the initial "promoter" of HS, its original involvement with the term having occurred in 1994, the EU was the first to suggest the application of the concept as a doctrine for security policy. This ensued in the context of the 2004 Barcelona Report entitled "A Human Security Doctrine for Europe" (AA.VV. 2004), published by the Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities established by former EU High-Representative, Javier Solana, who consistently advocated for the incorporation of the HS concept into the core of the EU foreign and security policy.

While the ESS refrains from explicitly laying out an EU HS agenda, this doctrine sets out to clarify how HS, as a strategic narrative, could be institutionalised within the EU and how it could benefit its external relations (Christou 2014; Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko and Messineo 2012). For this purpose, the Barcelona Report suggested three main elements of a security role for the EU: a combination of seven guiding principles for ensuring HS; including the priority of human rights, a "bottom-up" strategy and multilateralism, for instance; a HS reaction force consisting of 15 000 individuals, a portion of which are specialised civilians (the main focus of which would be to uphold human rights and promote law and order); and a new legal framework for intervention.

Herewith, it is argued that the only realistic version of European security policy is one that is developed under the auspices of HS (Glasius and Kaldor 2005), as this particular strategy is capable of providing the Union a fresh focus and sense of cohesion, so that it may address the concerns outlined by the ESS (Xavier 2010). It is of essence to point out, however, that the Barcelona report promoted a HS based on "freedom from fear" and physical insecurity, as opposed to its more expansive definition which includes "freedom from want", as proposed by the UNDP (1994) (Christou 2014; Liotta and Owen 2006).

Additionally, the HS Doctrine proposed by the report raises some concern regarding its viability, including the fact that the report only vaguely addresses the ways in which the EU is expanding its capabilities to be able to counter challenges via a HS policy. Furthermore, it remains uncertain how "strategic challenges", such as long-term planning and investment, and "pragmatic factors", such as the concern for how vulnerable civilians (part of the HS response force) would defend themselves in conflict, would be dealt with (Liotta and Owen 2006). In essence, viewed as fundamentally ambitious, the HS doctrine remains largely unimplemented.

The Madrid Report – *A European Way of Security* (Albrecht *et al.* 2007) from 2007 reinforced the ESS and the Barcelona Report and signified an important attempt to integrate HS into the EU through the CSDP. While conceiving of ways to operationalise and enshrine the concept, the report underlines that HS integrates the individual's basic needs, as well as the feeling of safety from tangible and intangible threats. It further declares that "'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' are both essential to people's sense of wellbeing and their willingness to live in peace." (Albrecht *et al.* 2007, 3).

But more significantly, it considers the lessons learned from EU civilian and military operations, conceiving of ways in which the CSDP might implement the criteria articulated in the Barcelona report. As such, the Madrid report served to strengthen the ideal of HS as the most appropriate security strategy for the EU. However, neither the EU Institutions nor the Member States have ever formally embraced it[23] (Martin and Kaldor 2010).

Albeit never explicitly adopting the concept of HS, its principles have always been embedded in the Union's foreign and security policies, as well as its initiatives in the fields of crisis management and conflict prevention, which follow holistic and bottom-up approaches. In this line of thought, the Madrid report sought to unveil the implicit use of HS within EU action and strived to make it less ambiguous, so that it could better serve its policies and more efficiently translate them into practical action (Martin and Kaldor 2010).

[23] The plethora of national approaches to HS has, in part, prevented its collective adoption. Austria and Norway, for instance, have been members of the HS Network since 1999. Currently, Greece, Ireland, Slovenia, and Switzerland are also members. Among others, Sweden has incorporated HS into its National Security Strategy (Sweden 2017a) and Strategy for Sustainable Peace (Sweden 2017b).

In reinforcing the ESS and evoking the need for the Union to assert itself as a global player, *Providing Security in a Changing World* (Council of the EU 2008), the report produced by the European Council in 2008 relative to the practical application of the ESS, became the first express mention of HS as the overarching principle of the EU's security approach (Martin and Kaldor 2010): "We have worked to build human security, by reducing poverty and inequality, promoting good governance and human rights, assisting development, and addressing the root causes of conflict and insecurity." (Council of the EU 2008, 2). This is reinforced on page 10: "We need to continue mainstreaming human rights issues in all activities in this field, including ESDP missions, through a people-based approach coherent with the concept of human security." (Council of the EU 2008, 10).

Following the ESS, which set its focus on the EU's external action, in 2010, EU Member States approved the Internal Security Strategy: "Towards a European Security Model" (Council of the EU 2010), which clearly portrays a European security model rooted in the principles of HS: "[...] EU internal security means protecting people and the values of freedom and democracy, so that everyone can enjoy their daily lives without fear." (Council of the EU 2010, 12).

In 2016, the EU published the Global Security Strategy entitled "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe" (Council of the EU 2016). This document became an important milestone for the development of the EU's identity as an international security provider, as it addressed the humanitarian crisis (refugee flow) as an immediate challenge to its external borders, while working to ensure that its internal and external actions were aligned and guided by the same goals and principles (Council of the EU 2016). Additionally, unlike other documents, it made explicit reference to the inclusion of HS into EU policy[24].

The latest EU (internal) security strategy, the European Security Union Strategy (EC 2020a), covers the period of 2020 to 2025 and highlights the development of skills and capacities to protect a rapidly evolving security environment. It lays up a comprehensive strategy for security that can adapt to current challenges in a cohesive manner.

Despite never advertising it as such, the EU incorporates both references to HS or principles thereof in documents and across several aspects of its external action policy. The CSDP, for instance, is one of the EU's most palpable contributions to HS as it distinctly matches its agenda on preventing conflict and promoting "freedom from fear" (Kotsopoulus 2006). Notwithstanding its clear military component, a large portion of the CSDP's work adheres to this principle (freedom from fear). In fact, across all EU crisis

[24] See pages 9, 14 and 28 of "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe" (Council of the EU 2016).

management operations, the employment of military tools has only ever served as a supplement to civilian ones (Magalhães 2016).

Thus, the EU's crisis management operations distinctly aided the actor in acquiring presence and visibility on the international security stage, in fact, it was the EU's 2006 military mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (EUFOR RDC), which clearly portrayed the EU's implementation of a HS approach in its external action and set a new precedent by establishing the EU as a hard security player in an African nation using military action when necessary, all without NATO assistance (Martin 2007).

Another example of the EU's engagement with the conception of HS - as the preferential concern with the basic needs of individuals – would be the creation of the ECHO, the main goal of which is the promotion of strategies for long-term development and empowerment of civilian populations, so as to promote resilience in regions afflicted by human insecurity. In a way, the efforts of this department aim to shed light onto the Union's external action in terms of humanitarian assistance (Xavier 2010).

As aforementioned, the EU is devoted to mainstreaming human rights and democracy worldwide through its economic treaties and reforms, thereby solidifying the assumption that the actor is already actively promoting the principal values of any HS agenda. This is reinforced in Article 3, Paragraph 5 of the TEU, which proclaims that through its external action, the EU aims for the:

> [...] eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter (EU 2012, 17).

The European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy (EIDHR) (European Parliament 2015), through which the EU encourages the growth of developing countries, is a blatant illustration of its work in the field of HS advocacy (Kotsopoulus 2006). Similarly, the Union reveals its efforts in cultivating HS through its country strategies, which are focused on protecting human rights and democracy by establishing a specific set of goals for each country, in order to incorporate the EU's guidelines into practical strategies (Lerch 2021).

In addition, in 2021, the Commission adopted an updated version of its DDR policy (Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration), which provides support to former combatants in attempts to improve long-term peace and human development in regions afflicted by conflict (EC 2021b). Most recently, impelled by Russia's military invasion in Ukraine, the EU Strategic Compass represents a significant step forward in the EU's security and defence agenda, and a reinforced determination to act more rapidly and coherently; secure and protect civilians; invest in new and innovative technologies and

cooperate with crucial partners to, more accurately, respond to current threats, ensuring HS for the EU and its neighbourhood (Council of the EU 2022b).

All this being said, how can it be that HS was never formally adopted as a strategic narrative for the EU? In response, two major critiques to the HS approach present themselves. Both having materialised after the release of the Barcelona report, the first concerns itself with the HS concept itself, which is argued to be just another "label" used to justify military intervention, while the other rests upon the belief that the HS approach lacks military tools and is, therefore, considered too soft (Kaldor, Martin and Selchow 2007).

In return, Mary Kaldor, coordinator of the Study Group on Human Security (SGHS), has underscored the interdependence and intricacy of the relation between a HS, which is based on physical protection, and one concerned with human development. That is to say that both "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" are crucial to human wellbeing (Kaldor, Martin and Selchow 2007). The perception that the EU is already engaged in promoting HS by another name is another significant reason, for which the concept has never clearly been adopted as a policy framework (Xavier 2010).

While it is true that the EU already implicitly promotes the principles of HS, it appears to avoid official commitment to the approach[25]. This clarifies the existence of clear gaps within the organisation's ambition to adopt a HS approach within its institutional framework. A sense of contradiction permeates the EU's stance on HS, for even though the ESS primarily placed its concern on the achievement of a "global/human security", the European Constitution seems to prioritise state security, by looking away from perceived tensions within the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) and its military component, the CSDP (Glasius and Kaldor 2005).

In a similar vein, EU members such as Germany and former member UK have contended that an EU-wide HS strategy might be too idealistic a leap (Christou 2014; Harnisch and Kim 2021; Martin 2007). Kotsopoulus (2006) points towards the intricate institutional structure of the EU as indicative of one of the major shortcomings in the implementation of a HS policy. The vast spectrum of actors engaging in the EU's external relations, including its Member States and its agencies, each one with different objectives and interests clearly hampers any potential agreements in regard to HS.

The obstruction of diverging needs and interest on a common security approach for the EU is reaffirmed in the fact that some countries - such as Spain, Slovenia and the Czech Republic - pursued the recognition of HS issues, both independently and collectively across the EU's institutions, while others influenced by populism and nationalism – such as Poland and Hungary – have misconstrued official

[25] Although it has explicitly referenced the term in some of its official documents: See EC 2021b and Council of the EU 2022b.

regulations on HS to undermine public campaigns on issues, such as abortion and gender equality, for instance (Harnisch and Kim 2021).

While the European Commission has become one of the major advocates[26] for a collective security role for the EU, both within and outside of its borders, Member States remain divisive. According to Tassinari (2016), events such as the refugee crisis served to deepen disagreements among members on what EU security should resemble. Additionally, division among EU members has been exacerbated, among others, by Brexit, and the most recent Russian aggression against Ukraine (Cachia and DeBattista 2022).

Kotsopoulus (2006) further advances that it becomes even more challenging to put a cohesive strategy into practice, when grappling with such a broad range of concerns that may all vaguely be categorised as "human security". Equally relevant is the fact that the execution of a comprehensive strategy would require the widespread acceptance of the idea of internal and exterior security as interdependent. However, that would implicate the yielding of authority to the EU over one of the most delicate aspects of national identity (Kotsopoulus 2006).

The Berlin Report (Andersson *et al.* 2016), produced in 2016 by the SGHS, brings forth another clear limitation in the EU's approach to HS. The report argues that, when addressing violent conflict, the EU seems to be stuck in its mentality as a 20th century organisation. As such, it employs tools and approaches, which are unfit to deal with threats in the 21st century. The report further contends that, in using a top-down approach to deal with contemporary crises, the EU is promoting an ambiguous state of "hybrid peace", in which extremist groups continue their illegal operations. The Berlin Report, thus, makes a case for the adoption of a "second generation human security" approach to armed conflict, which molds the principles of HS to fit modern threats (Andersson *et al.* 2016).

Momentum in expanding HS was primarily sustained through the publishing of the Barcelona and the Madrid Reports, as well as advocacy initiatives introduced by Solana[27], which subsided once the High-Representative left office (Christou 2014). The lack of EU member support alongside the fact that Solana and former Commissioner for external relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner appeared to be the main advocates of a HS doctrine for the EU, distinctly impeded its execution (Martin and Owen 2010).

Although the EU overtly perceives the value of HS through the regular use of the concept within speeches and treaties, and although the Union is already an influential force in domains associated with

[26] Particularly through the use of State of the Union addresses as tools to present a security agenda which speaks to Member States (Cachia and DeBattista 2022).

[27] See Helsinki Plus Report, for instance (EU-Russia Human Security Study Group 2010).

HS, measures to promote the framework remain fragmented, proving the absence of a comprehensive HS strategy for the EU (Kotsopoulus 2006).

**Table 4:** The UN and the EU in the Promotion of Human Rights and Human Security

| | **United Nations** | **European Union** |
|---|---|---|
| **Advancing HR** | • Promoting HR explicitly since 1945 through HR instruments, such as the UN Commission on HR and HR Council, the Universal Periodic Review, and peacebuilding missions | • Originally thought as a purely economic community, the Union began actively promoting HR as of 2009 in the context of the Lisbon Treaty, when the EU Charter became legally binding<br>• Ever since, the EU has been advancing HR through assistance programmes and bodies, such as ECHO, COHOM and the FRA |
| **Promoting HS** | • Cultivating "freedom from want" since the release of the 1994 UNDP Report<br>• Mainstreaming HS through mechanisms, such as the UNTFHS (1999), the CHS (2001) and the HSU (2004) | • Despite never formally adopting a HS Doctrine, the Union has incorporated the concept's main themes into several aspects of its external action policy<br>• The EU has been indirectly promoting HS through its HR agencies and trade agreements, but more directly "freedom from fear" through the CSDP |

### 3.3 Joint Efforts to Promote Human Security

Despite key differences in their organisational structure (intergovernmental system of the UN vs supranational system of the EU) and political reach (universal vs regional), the UN and the EU have, since their foundation, been avid promoters of rights and values deemed essential to the protection of HS. As such, both have shared the same principles that have underpinned the liberal international order since the end of World War II, among which multilateralism, adherence to the rule of law, universal human rights, social protection and democracy stand out (Zamfir and Fardel 2020).

The EU's continued promise of prosperity and peace throughout the continent serves to prove its commitment to the UN system, as it seamlessly coincides with the actor's common goal for the maintenance of worldwide peace and security. As declared by Federica Mogherini on UN day in 2018:

> [...] Investing in our partnership with the UN is natural as we share the same fundamental values and goals. [...] Together, the EU and UN have been, are and will be the strongest champions of dialogue and cooperation. This is why we will continue to defend multilateral diplomacy and its achievements [...] and to support the essential work of all UN agencies (Mogherini 2018a).

The EU's Member States, all of which are sovereign members of the UN, endorse the EU's foreign and security agenda in conformity with the TEU to leverage its authority across the globe, for the purpose of which they all speak under one voice at the General Assembly (Zamfir and Fardel 2020). Several UN agencies including General Assembly committees, the UN Economic and Social Council, and offices such as the World Health Organization, all work together to consolidate the EU's values (UNRIC 2007; Zamfir and Fardel 2020).

In a similar vein, the European Commission actively participates in UN activity, by intimately collaborating with the Council Presidency, in order to express the EU's views across several sectors (UNRIC 2007; Zamfir and Fardel 2020).

The EU's assistance to forums, such as the UN Human Rights Council, portrays a vivid example of its contributions to the work of UN human rights bodies (Lerch 2021). Most notably, it supports the UN's initiatives to detect and report human rights abuses through special processes, such as country-specific assessments and fact-finding operations (EEAS 2021c).

The realm of peacekeeping and conflict prevention epitomises one of the major fields of EU-UN cooperation. In fact, the UN's greatest financial donor is the EU through both the European Community and its Member States. This is not only the case for the organisation's usual budget, but particularly for the funding of the UN's blue-helmet missions and official development aid (UNRIC 2007; Margalef 2020; Zamfir and Fardel 2020).

Herewith, the EU partners with the UN by dispatching its own operations under the auspices of the CFSP, as well as supplying soldiers and police for UN peacekeeping interventions. As example of effective collaboration between the two stands the EU operation, EUFOR RD Congo, which successfully assisted the UN's peacekeeping force, "MONUC", in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2006 (UNRIC 2007).

In 2018, for instance, the "2019-2021 Priorities for the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peace Operations and Crisis Management" were launched, with the purpose of enhancing the UN-EU partnership on issues relating to peace and security, gender, conflict prevention and the peacebuilding sector (UN, n.d.). More recently, as with the Millennium Development Goals, through its external action the EU has committed to advancing the implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, as the UN SDGs provide a valuable platform for the Union to export its ideals worldwide and strengthen international partnerships (EC n.d.).

Thus, through collaborating with the UN across several different sectors, the EU has continuously supported the actor in disseminating human rights and democracy abroad, as well as fostering the fundamental principles of HS.

## Final Considerations

Designed in the aftermath of World War II, the UN's main purpose was to reestablish global peace and security by cooperating with States to prevent future wars. Therewith, the UN has been marking its place as human rights advocate across the international realm since 1945. Although the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights, which accentuated both universal and individual rights, is where the HS agenda originated (Kotsopoulos 2006), it was not until the UN Development Programme of 1994, that such a premise was clearly established in the UN's jargon, thereafter, becoming widely used in the security narratives of governments, NGOs, and scholars in the field.

Only at this point was HS raised to the status of doctrine, with the definition and goal being purposefully broad in order link freedom from fear and freedom from want. Thus, for years, the UN has been fostering a broad concept of HS through several dedicated mechanisms, such as the UNTFHS (1999) and the HSU (2004), for instance.

The European Commission's stance to HS differs widely from that of the UN by placing its focus on physical protection and almost exclusively incorporating it into its crisis management policy framework (Martin and Owen 2010). Therefore, HS has been mainly broadcast as "freedom from fear" in the context of the EU's CSDP missions.

Having evolved from a majorly economic actor, the EU has been investing substantial time and effort in enhancing its policy profile on security and defence, empirical evidence of which is provided by the European Security Strategy (2003), which was essential in introducing the notion of security as a precondition for development. It is important to note that the term itself was never formerly employed by

the strategy, however, it served to depict the EU as a promoting instrument of values and norms reflective of the principles of HS.

Although the extent to which HS has been disseminated as a strategic narrative within the EU is unclear, the Union's work indicates that the approach's fundamental principles and major themes are present across its external trade policies (Christou 2014).

The present chapter has aimed to clarify the roles and undertakings of both the UN and the EU in the promotion of universal human rights. By examining their engagement in international security concerns, this section has also endeavoured to provide a solid understanding of the incorporation of HS into the inner structure of these organisations, as well as uncover their efforts in propagating the concept and its values.

In providing an overview of the external action of these security actors, this section will allow for a more grounded interpretation of their contributions to child labour reduction from the lens of HS. Their efforts on this matter will be assessed in the following chapter, the main purpose of which is to analyse their practices to combat child labour in the DRC.

# CHAPTER IV. COMBATING CHILD LABOUR: UNITED NATIONS AND EUROPEAN UNION ACTION. BAND-AID ON A BULLET WOUND?

Since 1997, world leaders have committed to the elimination of child labour (ILO 2017a) and pledged to sustain international efforts to combat the issue in a series of Global Child Labour Conferences held in the Netherlands (2010), Brazil (2013), Argentina (2017) and, most recently, in South Africa (2022).

Despite historic accomplishments, such as the universal ratification of Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour and the decrease by 94 million child labourers between 2000 and 2016, estimates suggest that global progress against child labour stagnated between 2012 and 2016 (ILO 2017a), reaching an ultimate low in 2020. Particularly in Central Africa, the global pandemic has led to the first increase in child labour in the last 20 years, clearly indicating an urgency to intensify global efforts to tackle the phenomenon.

The previous chapter put forward an understanding of UN and EU action in promoting and upholding human rights and HS. By evaluating their undertakings in introducing HS within their inner structures and fostering an external action which is in alignment with its tenets, the section has served to form a base for further research on the influence of these key actors on child protection.

Building on this recognition, the present chapter aims to answer the following research question: Which measures have been adopted by the UN and the EU to combat child labour in the DRC between 2016 and 2022?

From their efforts to reduce the overall number of child labourers, to their impact on mitigating the practice in the DRC[28], this segment includes challenges to the action of these organisations and insight into potential solutions to sustainably eradicate the child labour problem.

In doing so, this chapter partly addresses the main research question posed in this dissertation: How have the UN and the EU, as promoters of HS, acted in regard to child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, between 2016 and 2022?

[28] See Table 5, which synthesises the primary measures adopted by the UN and the EU to combat child labour in the DRC.

## 4.1 The United Nations in the Fight against Child Labour

In his opening statement at the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour (2017), ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder, conveyed his frustration in regard to the practice prevailing in many areas of the developing world, stressing that "[T]he goals cannot be clearer, nor can the uncomfortable reality that if we do not do more and better, we will not achieve them [...]." (ILO 2017a). Concern over the rising number of child labourers across the world, most likely stems from estimates produced by the ILO report "Global Estimates of Child Labour: Results and Trends, 2012-2016," (ILO 2017b), which clearly warn towards the scale of the phenomenon. Despite a reduction in 94 million children affected by child labour since 2000, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, numbers have steadily increased since 2016.

Against this background, pledges were made to support a renewed commitment to the global fight against child labour, through the adoption of the "Buenos Aires Declaration on Child Labour, Forced Labour, and Youth Employment" in November 2017 (ILO 2018b) and the fulfilment of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, approved by all 193 UN members. Through Target 8.7 of the UN SDGs concerning the Agenda's Goal No. 8 for Decent Work, world leaders committed to take immediate action to "[...] eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour [...] and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms." (UN 2017a).

In order to help achieve this objective, in 2016, the ILO launched Alliance 8.7, a global partnership invested in achieving Target 8.7 at a global scale. By strengthening collective efforts among actors, such as the UN, trade unions, employers and companies, the partnership links the international and local levels (ILO 2016), thus setting the tone for an improved and more focused approach to the elimination of child labour worldwide.

As one of the first UN agencies to actively engage in the fight against child labour, the ILO has been devoted to combating the practice since its foundation in 1919, having later developed Conventions No. 138 and 182, both imperative to the eradication of the issue. In 1992, the organisation introduced the *International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour* (IPEC), which soon became its largest operational programme (ILO 1992). Over the last decades, the ILO has operated, through IPEC, in more than 60 countries, successfully removing millions of children from child labour (ILO 2014a). In doing so, it has designed numerous country-based initiatives for legislative change and developed several programmes that provide decent working conditions and appropriate income for thousands of families across the globe (ILO 2014a).

As a phenomenon that stretches across all levels of supply chains, permeating all economic sectors, child labour must be addressed from various perspectives. One of IPEC's main fields of action includes corporate social responsibility and social dialogue aimed at encouraging democratic participation and consensus among key players of the workforce on trade law and labour relations (ILO 2021). Both still active today, the *Child Labour Platform* (CLP) (ILO 2012) and the *Guidance Tool on How to do Business with Respect for Children's Rights to be Free from Child Labour* (ILO-IOE 2015) provide examples of work in these fields.

The CLP, a business initiative inaugurated in the context of the Global Child Labour Conference held in the Hague in 2010, aims to counter challenges that restrict the adoption of the abovementioned ILO Conventions across supply chains (ILO 2012). Active in 187 countries, the network cooperates directly with Alliance 8.7 to support members in achieving due diligence in value chains, while promoting social dialogue with a wide assortment of stakeholders to improve policies on child labour (ILO 2020a).

Established a year later, in response to the adoption of the "UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights" (OHCHR 2011), the ILO-IOE Guidance Tool orients companies on how to prevent child labour in their supply chains, by analysing whether current policies and procedures are in line with the UN Guiding Principles and ILO Conventions (ILO-IOE 2015). Similarly, the ILO's *Global Business Network on Forced Labour* brings together business actors and other relevant stakeholders from around the globe to advance the elimination of the practice (ILO 2020a).

Working in close cooperation with a number of international partners, the ILO additionally tackles child labour through capacity-building, monitoring and research. The *Global Action Programme on Child Labour Issues Project* planned for the period of 2011 to 2017, has served to illustrate this. Active in more than 40 countries, the project was executed in collaboration with the US Department of Labour to enhance legislation and boost national capacity to address child labour through different policies aimed at improving access to quality education and sustainable livelihoods, for instance (ILO 2011).

An independent final evaluation (ILO n.d.b) suggested several positive outcomes of this project. In more than 15 different countries, the programme was effective in improving research capacities and monitoring systems at the national level, and in enhancing inspection systems at the local level. Additionally, the project succeeded in expanding national legislation in these countries to include the concern for child labour in the domestic context, which led to significant policy changes in other countries affected by the issue. The Philippines and Ecuador, for instance, have since made real commitments to achieve Target 8.7 and end child labour in their countries by allocating substantial funds to this purpose (ILO n.d.b).

Further ILO support is provided by the IPEC+ *Flagship Programme*, which combines IPEC and the Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour [29] (SAP/FL) in a joint effort to promote a new push towards the fight against child labour and human trafficking, with particular emphasis on informal economies, global value chains and fragile States (ILO 2018c). Most recently, the programme has developed strategies in 62 countries aimed at analysing the impacts of Covid-19 on child labour and creating frameworks capable of addressing those impacts (ILO 2020b).

In 2021, the UN declared the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, which spurred the High-Level Dialogue for Action on Child Labour (ILO 2021a) held in June of the same year. The event brought together a wide range of actors to discuss the implications of rising numbers of child labour and devise plans to appropriately address them, giving special emphasis to the importance of restoring gains reversed by the effects of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The global pandemic, wreaked havoc as it swept across the entire world, however, it was poor- and middle-income countries which suffered the most. It was in these regions that humanitarian crises ensued as a result of instable economies, deep-seated corruption and poor social protection systems. Ensuring strong support networks is, therefore, crucial to alleviate the impacts of the pandemic and prevent its propagation. In recognition of this, the IOE and the ITUC have called for a global social protection fund to assist priority countries (ILO 2021a).

The issue of inadequate social protection systems is closely tied to another root cause of child labour, which is informality. According to estimates from 2020 (ILO-UNICEF 2020), throughout the African continent, close to 90% of all economic activity is conducted in the informal sector. Such statistics raise high concern regarding the effectiveness of assistance funds provided by development actors. Mr. Matthias Thorns, Deputy Secretary-General of IOE, underscored this at the High-Level Dialogue for Action on Child Labour. In his intervention, Mr. Thorns suggested that contributions from organisations, such as the EU, one of the world's biggest contributors of development aid, run the risk of never reaching beneficiaries who are not officially registered (ILO 2021a).

Just as relevant to the fight against child labour is collaboration in the field of education. Universal education not only serves as an incentive to keep children in schools by providing meals for those who attend (Human Rights Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022), but also improves children's chances of integrating a healthy society, in which they can later find decent work. Launched in 2002, the *Global Partnership for Education* has been engaging several partners and donors in its support for quality education systems in low-income countries, ensuring their commitment to its new strategic

[29] One of the ILO's technical programmes.

plan for the period of 2021 to 2025. Among these partners are several UN agencies, such as UNICEF and UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the World Food Programme (Global Partnership for Education 2022).

In agreement with the latest ILO-UNICEF report on child labour, migrant children are particularly susceptible to human trafficking and child labour (ILO-UNICEF 2020). Therefore, special attention should be paid to preventing these risks when addressing forced and mass migration. UNICEF's engagement in this field is evident and has been strengthened by its commitment to the *Global Action Plan to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants* (UNODC, IOM and UNICEF 2015), deployed in partnership with the EU and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2015. Envisioned to end in 2022, the programme has covered 13 different countries, across four continents, anticipating the prevention of human trafficking, the establishment of support programmes for victims and the prosecution of perpetrators (UNODC 2021).

According to a report produced by all project partners in 2019, several achievements have been identified, including the passage of National Action Plans against human trafficking, which were customised to align with the situations in Brazil, Colombia, Mali and South Africa, thus enriching their response to the issue (IOM 2019).

Additional support to the UN Agenda has been provided by projects, such as *ACCEL*[30] *Africa* selected for the period of 2018 to 2022. This project addresses child labour in the cocoa and cotton industries, in Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda. Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the plan relies on cooperation among civil society organisations, governments, the African Union and UN agencies to accelerate action towards the eradication of child labour in these regions (ILO 2019).

In a similar fashion, the *CLEAR Cotton* project, intended for the same period, covers the cotton, textile and garment supply networks in Burkina Faso, Mali, Pakistan and Peru. Counting with the support of the EU, the ILO and the FAO, the project aims to enhance the foundations for policy, law, and regulation to prevent the practice, while encouraging local authorities to take decisive action to end child and forced labour in the affected areas (ILO 2018a).

Furthermore, the V Global Conference on Child Labour, hosted in 2022 by the South African government, has played a major role in global efforts to eradicate the phenomenon. While uniting key actors from across the globe, the conference has led to the adoption of the "Durban Call to Action", which consists of commitments to address inconsistencies in child labour strategies and policies, so that

[30] "Accelerate Action for the Elimination of Child Labour in Africa."

progress on eliminating the practice may be brought back on track in time for the ultimate goal of Agenda 2030 (Republic of South Africa, ILO and Alliance 8.7 2022a).

Despite positive advancements in promoting a global consciousness on the urgency of eliminating child labour, as well as a plethora of plans and policies to do so, the fact remains that the practice continues to affect the lives of millions across the globe.

As the ILO's largest technical programme, IPEC, for instance, has generally obtained positive results on child labour reduction, however, its action is significantly hampered by the limited capacity and resources of its national counterparts (Nesi, Nogler, and Pertile 2016). Additionally, challenges arise when trying to implement initiatives in regions, such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are burdened by a number of security concerns (ILO 2014b). Likewise, project execution is often constrained in countries affected by hunger and disease outbreaks, such as HIV/AIDS (ILO 2006).

The fact that some projects remain largely unimplemented due to such local restrictions may portend that initiatives are not being adequately evaluated prior to their deployment (Rozani 2022).

In addition, some researchers have pointed towards the fact that evidence to support the effectiveness of policy initiatives is rather weak (Dammert, De Hoop, Mvukiyehe, and Rosati, 2017; Rozani 2022), therefore inhibiting the capacity to improve and develop better policies (Edmonds 2007). It is surprising, for instance, that despite the remarkable achievement of the adoption of ILO Convention No. 138 (establishing a minimum age of employment) by 141 countries, there is a shortage of research concerning the effectiveness of such policies (Rozani 2022).

Furthermore, Edmonds (2007) observes that the aspect of child labour, which has received the least amount of attention in research, are the decision-makers. In light of this, Rozani (2022) criticises the fact that authority in child labour matters has been inherently allocated to international actors, such as the ILO and UNICEF, when these should be considering local communities and child labourers themselves, as discussion partners:

> Until international organisations evaluate their privilege, complacency, moral imperialism, and implicit biases when establishing policies and frameworks and consider the children engaged in labour as individuals granting them their intrinsic human rights, the abolition of child labour is far from being actualised (Rozani 2022, 42).

In the same line of thought, Nononsi (2015) defends that effective measures to combat child labour must prioritise the participation of children and acknowledge States as development actors themselves.

## ***Combating Child Labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo***

The DRC's fragile political situation, chronic poverty and scarce employment opportunities drive thousands of families to the informal sector, in which children are especially vulnerable to abuse. Seen as one of the primary drivers of child labour in the DRC is attributed to pervasive poverty in the country, efforts to eliminate the issue range from general humanitarian assistance and development support to more targeted measures.

Through its vast system of agencies, funds and bodies, the UN has played an active role in the DRC since the Second Congo War, closely collaborating with the government to ensure the stability and sustainability of the country. In addition, the UN has adopted an integrated approach to eradicate child labour in the country, which involves measures to strengthen legislative and social support systems and reduce gender inequalities, for instance (UN DR Congo 2022).

The present subsection will synthesise these efforts, dividing them into two groups: prevention and response, including the reintegration of children removed from child labour. To ensure uniformity within the chapter, this division will be replicated in the section regarding action taken by the EU to address child labour in the DRC.

### Prevention

Largely focused on tackling the root causes of the issue, UN measures to counter child labour are majorly preventative in nature. However, several foster a comprehensive approach, which includes both prevention and response-oriented strategies. The *National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour* (2012–2025) provides an example of this. Established in 2012 by the DRC's National Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour (NCCL) (DRC, MELSS 2011), the plan was developed in conjunction with UNICEF to reduce child labour and eradicate its worst forms in the country by 2020.

Due to an initial lack of funding, the plan has since been extended for the period of 2020 to 2025, calling for awareness-raising in communities and the enforcement of child labour laws. Moreover, it advocates for the promotion of universal primary education, enhanced monitoring systems, and the provision of technical and vocational training, as well as assistance programmes to reintegrate children withdrawn from the labour market (US DOL 2020).

In a similar vein, the *Action Plan to End the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers* (DRC 2012) has been operating in the country since 2012 and counts with the support of the UN to put an end to the use of children in armed conflict. The high prevalence of armed groups in mining areas increases the risk of recruitment, particularly for those children already working at mining sites. To prevent their recruitment, this plan supports the national armed forces of the DRC with specific guidelines for age verification (US DOL 2019).

According to a 2016 report by the US Department of Labour (US DOL 2016), in April of the same year, age verification procedures successfully impeded the recruitment of 191 children (UN, Security Council 2016). By working in partnership to implement the plan, MONUSCO and the Congolese government aim to provide reintegration services for children and ensure that offenders are held accountable. Efforts in persuading the heads of several non-state armed groups to adopt the plan have shown fruitful, as by February 2020 additional 27 groups had committed to adopting comparable strategies (US DOL 2019).

As portrayed by the latest estimates on child labour, countries with a lower development index are subject to higher numbers of child labour (ILO-UNICEF 2020). This reiterates the importance of incorporating the field of human development into the fight against this practice. In that sense, it is essential to tackle the issue through development assistance strategies, in addition to other fields of action.

Cognisant of this, the UN has been promoting HS and sustainable development measures in the DRC since 2013, when it executed the *UN Development Assistance Framework* (2013-2017) (UN, Development Group 2017), a plan describing the necessary steps for the realisation of national development goals. To this end, the UN develops a "common country assessment" document, which is then used by its agencies to analyse the national development situation of a given country, identifying key issues simultaneously (ILO n.d.a).

The ILO uniquely contributes to this framework by designing support plans for priority countries, best known as *Decent Work Country Programmes*. Envisioned for the period from 2021 to 2024, the latest country programme developed for the DRC focuses on promoting social protection systems and adequate employment opportunities for youth (ILO 2021c).

Other development cooperation projects include "MAP 16"[31], for instance (ILO 2018d). Launched in 2017, the ongoing project is funded by the US Department of Labour and implemented by the ILO to conduct research on the child labour situation, building upon the knowledge acquired to develop

[31] "Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement to Accelerate Action against Child Labour and Forced Labour."

innovative methods and transmute them into practical action to reduce the phenomenon (US DOL 2020). Highlights of the project include the publishing of six studies on the overall situation of child labour, as well as in the particular context of supply chains; training assistance provided to over 25 to National Statistical Offices on the matters of data collection and analysis; and the approval of new child labour policies by six different countries (US DOL n.d).

Keeping in mind the extent of the challenge which is child labour in the DRC's informal mining sector, it is undeniable that a collective approach, involving all members of supply chains, should be prioritised when tackling the issue. The UNGC, conceived by Kofi Annan in 2000, provides a suitable example of efforts to advance such a collective approach. Bridging civil society, the private sector and governments from across the globe, the UNGC aims to facilitate responsible business conduct and sustainable means of production (UN, Global Compact 2020). As the world's largest corporate responsibility initiative, the Global Compact has been active in the DRC since September 2017, when a local network was established in Kinshasa, the country's capital (The Financial 2017).

In an interview conducted by the author, Senior Programme Manager of the Business and Human Rights Programme at the UN Global Compact Network UK, Benafsha Charlick-Delgado (Charlick-Delgado 2022), pointed towards an ongoing project which has been functioning under the network's child labour workstream for the past three and a half years. The project's main focus lies in mobilising the private sector to address the worst forms of child labour in the DRC's supply chains (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

Having engaged more than 650 companies both at the international and local levels, the project places particular emphasis on the Eastern DRC, known as the country's most fragile region. Despite the immense pressure this section is under due to grave societal issues, ranging from the presence of armed groups to vast waves of displacement, local businesses are still active in the region. These businesses then supply their products on to global markets, linking their own value chains with those of international corporations (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

One of the major challenges faced by companies attempting to address issues in these supply chains through a top-down approach, stems from the lack of visibility and traceability of products. To counteract this, the project aims to address supply chain issues from the bottom up, by working with local businesses to ensure that due diligence standards are introduced actually at the mines themselves and "pushed" upward, in the hopes of meeting international companies and their top-down efforts halfway, thus increasing transparency in the chain's middle tiers (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

According to the interviewee, one of the most effective initiatives in addressing the traceability issue of supply chains in the DRC, is the International Tin Supply Chain Initiative (ITSCI), a mineral

verification system responsible for weighing, bagging, and tagging minerals, before they enter the global market. Despite its own challenges, this mechanism has an influential role in ensuring the visibility of minerals sourced in conflict-affected areas across the African Great Lakes Region, as it increases transparency regarding the origins of minerals, including the particular mine they were sourced from, and the people involved in the mining process (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

In addition, the child labour working group at the UNGC UK Network has proven helpful in establishing a level of trust among member companies and the network itself. Through quarterly peer-to-peer discussions, experts share their knowledge and experience on different measures, assessing successes and shortcomings, thus promoting in-depth understanding of core issues through meaningful engagement (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

In a similar manner to the UNGC, the Action Group on Supply Chains chaired by the ILO, was launched in 2017 in the context of Alliance 8.7 as a focal point where organisations from the public, private and nonprofit sectors meet to devise initiatives to improve supply chain due diligence worldwide. By stepping up efforts in key countries and their supply chains, the group aims to advance research on issues such as child labour in value chains, encourage coherent policies on the practice, as well as increase coordination of practical tools to combat the phenomenon (Alliance 8.7 2021).

Nevertheless, achieving responsible global supply chains depends not only on those directly involved with cobalt supply itself, but on the commitment of government actors just as much. That being said, when the National Minister of Mines of the DRC, His Excellency Professor Willy Kitobo Samsoni, joined the “Cobalt Action Partnership” in December 2020, an important step was taken towards the goal of eliminating child labour in global supply chains. Ratified in May of the same year by UNICEF in collaboration with the Global Battery Alliance, the partnership pursues the goal to form a multi-sectoral coalition of organisations to stimulate transparent cobalt supply chains; promote safe working conditions; improve gender equality; tackle corruption and human rights abuses in mining and relieve its environmental effects (UNICEF 2020c).

In November 2020, UNICEF (2020d) announced its plan to raise USD 21 million from public and private partners to fund a series of initiatives to address the immanent causes of child labour in mining communities. One of these initiatives, the *Fund for the Prevention of Child Labour in Mining Communities*, carried out in collaboration with the Congolese government and civil society groups, aims to support the fulfillment of the SDGs in line with the country's national development goals. As such, the fund is intended for the enhancement of national social protection systems, and the improvement of crucial aspects to child labour prevention, such as birth registration, healthcare, and education (UNICEF 2020d).

The latter should not be underestimated when addressing the phenomenon, for estimates have shown that the majority of children involved in child labour cannot attend school (ILO-UNICEF 2020), therefore ensuring free quality education for all children is of paramount importance to reducing the incidence of the practice. Despite school closure during the global pandemic, support from UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education enabled the DRC's Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education to relieve impacts on children. Through the first-ever radio-based learning programme, more than 25 million children were able to resume their education remotely (UNICEF 2020b).

With an emphasis on preventing child labour in ASM, the *COTECCO* [32] initiative implemented between 2018 and 2021 through the ILO and NGO PACT with funding from the US Department of Labour, sought to reduce the issue in the DRC's cobalt supply chain. Among the project's major achievements are the endorsement of initiatives to strengthen the application and enforcement of laws, regulations, and action plans regarding child labour in ASM; the improved monitoring of human rights abuses within supply chains; the establishment formal partnerships between national agencies responsible for LSM and ASM; as well as the training of more than 150 partners on the worst forms of child labour (US DOL 2018).

Despite these improvements, the numbers of child labourers worldwide remain high. Accordingly, the ILO envisioned the *ILO Multi Partner Fund* for the timeframe of 2021 to 2030. Developed under the auspices of the 8.7 Accelerator Lab (ILO n.d.a) - an ILO initiative to hasten progress on eliminating child labour - the fund counts on the support of numerous actors, such as research institutions, local governments, trade unions and civil society groups, to expedite the reproduction of successful strategies and approaches to ending child labour in the DRC, Ghana, Indonesia and South Africa (ILO 2021d).

## Response

The DRC's Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration Commission (UEPN-DDR) acts, in collaboration with MONUSCO, UNICEF and several NGOs, to improve the identification and release of Congolese children involved with armed groups (US DOL 2016), thus presenting itself as a seemly example of action to respond to child labour in the country.

Launched in 2014, the UEPN-DDR's DDR III[33] plan was implemented[34], with the support of the UN, to assist in the reintegration of former members of armed groups (including children) and refer them to UNICEF's social assistance providers for family reunion (US DOL 2019, 2020).

[32] "Combating Child Labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Cobalt Industry."
[33] "National Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Resettlement Plan."
[34] Adopted in the context of the "Framework Agreement for Peace, Security, and Cooperation for the DRC and the Great Lakes Region" (See DRC 2013).

Additionally, the UN has proved its continued support to the DRC via its Joint Human Rights Office, through which it has assisted the Congolese armed forces' "Action Plan for Combating Sexual Violence", in addition to providing training, technical and financial support to the country's Ministry of Human Rights (UN General Assembly 2019).

Furthermore, in March 2019, the Joint Office sponsored the execution of the *Plan of Action for the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo* (DRC 2014) to address violence in conflict. As such, the plan called for a number of initiatives targeted at improving state capability and action, promoting the protection of civilians, as well as holding perpetrators accountable for grave human rights abuses. One of the plan's major outcomes occurred on the 25th of March 2019, when the commander of the Raia Mutomboki group, one of the many notorious armed groups of the DRC, was incarcerated on the grounds of crimes against humanity (Bujakera 2019).

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have taken a devastating toll on the Congolese population by restricting their income and, thus, increasing the prevalence of children in labour. In response, in April 2021, the World Bank and UNICEF in partnership with the DRC government, established the one-year programme: "Support for the Implementation of Immediate Responses to Deal with the Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on Informal Sector Actors in Kinshasa (2021-2022)".

The project's primary goal was to mitigate the dispersion of the corona virus in Kinshasa's informal sector, through the effective management of the pandemic's impacts on the physical, emotional, and social health of members in the sector. Critical services were able to keep functioning regularly due to preventative measures, such as food and income support. Therefore, the effects of stagnant economic growth during the pandemic could be alleviated (ILO 2021e).

Nevertheless, it is important to grasp the fact that, despite rigorous efforts to eliminate child labour in the DRC, the phenomenon lingers, particularly in the country's cobalt mines. As discussed in Chapter II, child mining in the DRC is a highly complex issue, induced by a multitude of historic, political, and socio-economic factors specific to the country. These must be taken into consideration when designing an efficient response to child labour.

Research conducted by World Vision in 2013 (World Vision 2013) included interviews with artisanal miners of the Katanga region, many of which were children. Results highlighted the intricate link between intergenerational poverty and a lack of critical services, such as access to healthcare and education, as well as a scarcity in employment opportunities. These are all root causes of child labour and particular to the context of the country.

The need for a context-specific approach to child mining in the DRC is reiterated in the fact that mining communities in this country are highly isolated. Some regions can only be accessed by helicopter (HR Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022). Therefore, regulatory agencies are often reluctant to visit such remote areas (ILO 2017d).

The inefficiency of certain policies in addressing the issue indicates a certain lack of recognition of these local particularities. For instance, despite the endorsement of the 2009 Child Protection Code (DRC 2009), which stipulates free and compulsory primary education for all Congolese children, school fees continue to be charged as there is a lack of government funding to guarantee that teachers are adequately paid, and schools appropriately equipped (Amnesty International 2016).

A lack of funding was also perceived in the case of the DRC's NCCL – instituted to monitor the National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour (DRC, MELSS 2011) - which despite substantial foreign investment, was unable to implement the project within its originally intended period (US DOL 2019), hence its extension to 2025. In that sense, Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra (2017) contend that top-down approaches are inadequate when dealing with child labour in this particular context.

Research conducted by Rozani (2022) reinforces this notion, by illustrating the different needs of child miners from India and the DRC. By analysing the circumstances of child labour in both countries, the author concludes that while legislation on compulsory schooling would be more advantageous in India, in the DRC flexible schooling programmes, which allow children to combine school with work, would be more beneficial. This is due to the fact, that mining in the DRC is an indispensable source of revenue for thousands of families. Completely removing children from work could irrefutably cause more harm than good (Faber, Krause, and Sánchez de la Sierra 2017).

The author reinstates the importance of her argument, by stressing that although both countries have adopted the same conventions, and followed the global strategy recommended by the ILO, both have failed to eliminate child labour in their countries (Rozani 2022).

Against this backdrop, Rozani (2022) argues that current policies to eradicate child mining in the DRC lack the thorough assessment they require, and directly links the reason for their shortcomings to the recognition, that child miners are not being acknowledged as stakeholders in decisions that fundamentally impact them.

## 4.2 The European Union in the Fight against Child Labour

Preventing crisis and restoring stability outside of its borders has become an ongoing duty for the EU – a sense of responsibility acknowledged by both the European Security Strategy and the EU Internal Security Strategy. As threats to global security continue to evolve, the lines distinguishing the external from the internal security dimensions are becoming less defined. As such, to reach its core political objectives, the EU must combine its policies, mechanisms, and tools in an all-inclusive approach (EC and HR 2013).

Having featured in the organisation's external action for years, the shared strategic perspective of the EU comprehensive approach has proven successful in delivering more coherent and effective policies and in coordinating efforts between EU institutions and its Member States (EC and HR 2013).

One of the most common drivers of child labour is poverty, which in itself impedes sustainable development, thus promoting a chronic cycle of insecurity. In order to break this cycle, peace and security must go hand in hand. Therefore, the intricate link between security and development serves as a fundamental guiding principle in the establishment of an EU comprehensive approach (EC and HR 2013). In this sense, the eradication of child labour, as a convoluted phenomenon, can highly benefit from the coordinated efforts of such an approach.

The EU's steadfast commitment to eradicating child labour has been clear since the adoption of the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights, which, as stated in Article 32, prohibits the employment of minors, and demands the minimum age of employment be at least as high as the age of graduation (EP, Council of the EU and EC 2000b).

In 2017, to improve the uniformity and coherence of its internal and external policies on child protection, the EU revised its *Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child* (EC 2017) adopted the previous year. The main goal of these guidelines is to expand the EU's role in the protection of child rights in its external action, through practical guidance provided to its members and institutions (EC 2017).

The same year, the Union endorsed the resolution on the long-term abolition of child labour issued at the IV Global Child Labour Conference, held in Argentina (ILO 2017c), while pledging to commit to the implementation of the revised guidelines previously mentioned; promote the ratification and implementation of the ILO child labour conventions; as well as support the fight against child and forced labour (EU 2017a).

Furthermore, in light of the *European Child Guarantee* (Council of the European Union 2021), the EU provides its members with guidance and practical instruments to ensure that every child at the brink of poverty is assisted and provided with basic services (EEAS 2021d). Additionally, the concern for child labour figures evidently in the *Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024* (European Union 2020) adopted by the Commission and the High Representative in March 2020, as well as in the *Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025* (EC 2021g), through which the EU reiterated its efforts to protect working children from human trafficking.

As a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and both ILO conventions No. 182 and No. 138, the EU cooperates closely with actors such as ILO and UNICEF to advance the UN SDGs and Target 8.7 for the elimination of child labour (Zamfir 2019b). Particularly through donations to development programmes, the EU has become the primary contributor to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. An example of action in this regard is the *CLEAR Cotton* (2018-2022) project implemented by the ILO and FAO with funding from the EU to combat child labour in the cotton, textile and garment supply chains (ILO 2018a).

"CLEAR Cotton" aims to support local governments and other key players of the affected sectors in taking effective action to eliminate child labour, through enhanced legislative and regulatory frameworks (Zamfir 2019b). In Pakistan, the project is empowering women in cotton-growing areas to eliminate child labour by providing realistic economic opportunities for mothers and encouraging them to invest in their children's education (EC 2021i). In Southern Punjab, the programme is assisting in the protection of children from toxic chemicals, by increasing public awareness on the harmful pesticides used in cotton farming and their negative effects on the health of children. So far, the initiative has removed 4000 children from cotton farms and introduced them to special educational programmes (EC 2021j).

Additionally, EU efforts to address child labour can take an indirect approach through poverty reduction strategies, the employment and education sectors, for instance. A focus on education is essential to the fight against child labour, as a large portion of children in child labour cannot attend school, whether due to scarce financial resources, lack of time or energy. However, there are several ways to keep children in schools and out of the labour market. The most common approaches include encouraging birth registrations, awareness-raising campaigns, improving social protection systems and vocational training (Zamfir 2019b). As a former teacher, Commissioner Urpilainen, has pledged to increase investments to the education sector up to at least 10% of all EU external funding (Republic of South Africa, ILO and Alliance 8.7 2022b).

When it comes to social protection, support systems are proven to alleviate poverty, inadvertently reducing the occurrence of child labour (ILO 2021a). The erection of a universal social protection system has, therefore, become ever so prominent in the child labour debate. According to the Commission's Acting Director for Sustainable Finance, Investment and Jobs, Erica Gerretsen, the EU is currently collaborating with 20 different countries through budget assistance programs to assess the financial implications of creating such systems (ILO 2021a).

In addition, the EU has supported projects targeting the release and reintegration of children from armed groups (Zamfir 2019b), as well as programmes for the empowerment of women and girls. Gender equality programmes are fundamental in combating child labour, for as indicated in the global child labour estimates report from 2020 (ILO-UNICEF 2020), the percentage of girls in child labour worldwide would be significantly higher if household chores, for 21 hours or more per week, were to be included within the scope of child labour. When taking these parameters into consideration, statistics reveal that 62% of children in domestic work are girls (ILO-UNICEF 2020). This gender gap underpins the urgent need to support young girls, so that they may find an alternative route to domestic work.

The EU actively promotes gender equality through increased access to high-quality education for women and girls, improved social protection networks, decent jobs and other income-generating opportunities (EC 2021i). By empowering women economically, these initiatives also contribute to poverty reduction and, subsequently, to the fight against child labour. On top of that, a gender focused approach is particularly useful in conflict scenarios, in which women and girls are most commonly targeted by sexual violence. According to latest UN Secretary-General report, in 21 countries affected by conflict, 19 379 children suffered serious violations, among which 98% of sexual abuse was committed against girls (EEAS 2022a).

In October 2019, the *Council Conclusions on Combating the Sexual Abuse of Children* (Council of the EU 2019) also addresses the fight against organised crime and human trafficking. A year later, the *EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025* (EC 2020c) was adopted and similarly confirms the EU's intention to end gender-based violence against women and girls.

As the world's largest importer of cocoa (EC 2020d), the EU is increasingly devoted to preventing child labour from reaching its supply chains. The "EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2021-2024" (EC 2021c), for instance, pledges to take the necessary steps to end child labour in European supply chains; strengthen labour inspections by establishing trade incentives; and foster increased collaboration among partners and businesses to address the issue. These steps include the Commission's "zero tolerance policy on child labour in new trade agreements", the goal of which is to place environmental

concerns, labour protection and sustainable development at the centre of the Union's bilateral trade agreements (Von der Leyen 2019), clearly indicating the actor's commitment to the ILO's goal of ending child labour in all of its forms by 2025 (EEAS 2021e).

In agreement with its zero-tolerance policy, the EU has developed numerous strategic interventions across the cocoa, cotton, garment, fisheries, and mining sectors. In Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, for instance, in which close to 7 million farmers rely on the export of cocoa as their main source of income, the EU launched the *Sustainable Cocoa Initiative* (2020), a multistakeholder dialogue to advance the fight against child labour. In doing so, the initiative targets the promotion of responsible business conduct, the protection of forests and the provision of adequate income for farmers working in the sector (EC 2020d).

The following year, the Union increased its support to the sector by announcing a EUR 25 million assistance budget for these regions (EC 2021d). In a similar vein, in August 2021, the EU funded the *CLARITY*[35] Project in the Tanzanian mining sector. The three-year programme targets marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, women, and children, and analyses the challenges that exclude them from the formal sector, by working to prevent human rights violations, corruption, child and forced labour, environmental degradation, among others (EEAS 2021f).

EU commitment to child rights equally features in its trade policy and legislative measures. Through its "Free Trade Agreements" and "Generalised Scheme of Preferences" (GSP) the EU assists developing countries in poverty mitigation and the creation of decent jobs, which are in alignment with international human rights (EC 2021e). In order to reinforce environmental, social and climate standards, in September 2021, the Commission proposed an enhanced scheme for the timeframe of 2024-2034. According to the proposed revised GSP regulation, the export of commodities produced using child labour is now motive to revoke preferences (Schmit 2022). Likewise, the EU Free Trade Agreements have strong measures in their "Trade and Sustainable Development" (TSD) chapters to successfully implement and promote the ratification of ILO Conventions on the Elimination of Child Labour (Schmit 2021).

Furthermore, the Union commits to supporting corporate social responsibility through its assistance to instruments such as the UN, ILO and OECD Due Diligence Guidelines (Reynders 2020), for instance. In recognition of these guidelines, in May 2017, the EU adopted the *Conflict Minerals Regulation* (EP and Council of the EU 2017b), under which EU companies are expected to ensure the transparency of their supply operations.

[35] "Collective Action for Rights Realisation in Extractive Industry."

Resource rich regions are often plagued by the presence of armed groups, which finance their activities through the extraction of "conflict minerals" – such as tin, tantalum and gold. As such, the main goals of the regulation are to prevent the import of conflict minerals into Europe; avert those involved in supply chains from using such minerals; and protect the rights of workers in the sector (EP and Council of the EU 2017b).

Additionally, in order to guarantee the effectiveness of the regulation, the EU has developed a set of "accompanying measures" designed to assist ASM in conflict and high-risk areas (EurAc 2017). One of these measures is the "European Partnership for Responsible Minerals", responsible for facilitating cooperation among actors across value chains, including governments and civil society to achieve the ultimate goal of responsible mineral supply chains (EC 2021h).

It does so, in part, by assisting businesses and providing resources to strengthen their due diligence procedures, thus ensuring that the criteria set by the EU Responsible Minerals Regulation is met. In addition, the partnership supports ethical sourcing by encouraging the transition of artisanal and small-scale miners from informality to the formal labour market (EC 2021h).

Corporate responsibility is further promoted through Directive 2014/95/EU on non-financial disclosure (EP and the Council of the EU 2014), in the context of which, since 2018, EU companies are obliged to provide exhaustive reports on their practices on human rights standards (Mogherini 2018b).

Additionally, in February of 2022, the Commission adopted the proposal for a *Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence*, which sets new mandatory requirements for EU companies across all sectors to assess risks, identify and prevent the environmental impacts of their production, as well as labour rights violations including those of children in supply chains, both inside and outside of the EU (EC 2022).

Moreover, on June 9th, 2022, the European Parliament passed a resolution requesting a ban on the entry of goods produced using forced labour into the EU. A potential import ban is an essential addition to the proposal for a directive on sustainable corporate due diligence adopted by the Commission in February. As such, the Parliament has called on the Commission to release a proposal for a new instrument to address forced labour, which places victims at the forefront and sets its emphasis on remediation (European Coalition for Corporate Justice 2022).

In a similar line of thought, through the suspension of rights and preferences, EU trade policies may be leveraged to tackle child labour. The textile trade agreement with Uzbekistan presents a perfect example of this. Aware of the high prevalence of child labour in the country's cotton farms, the Union

withheld trade privileges to Uzbekistan until the phenomenon was addressed and widely eradicated (Zamfir 2019b).

The EU's engagement with stakeholders makes out a large portion of its efforts to eliminate child labour. On the 25th of March 2021, proposals for a new strategy between the European Union and Africa were adopted (EP 2021). The renewed partnership aims to boost future cooperation between the two continents, while giving priority to issues such as human development, sustainable trade relations, improved innovation and research in the fields of health, education, policy and financing, to name a few (EC and HR 2020). Further details were debated at the sixth European Union - African Union Summit held in Brussels on the 17 and 18 of February 2022. As part of a shared vision for 2030, leaders approved an Investment Package of EUR 150 billion to support funds for the development of more resilient and sustainable economies (Council of the EU 2022c).

Similarly, through participation in Alliance 8.7, the Global Partnership for Education, the 2021 Conference on the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour and the latest Global Conference on child labour held in Durban, the EU has repeatedly echoed its commitment to child labour elimination worldwide (EC 2021f).

Commitment itself, however, is not enough to deal with the dimension of the problem, which continues to afflict millions globally. Despite an overall positive engagement in efforts to reduce child labour, EU action has been faced with criticism particularly regarding its regulation on conflict minerals (Bergkamp 2017; Härkönen 2018).

Penelope Bergkamp (2017) highlights some of the regulation's potential secondary effects, which are mainly driven by the idealistic assumption that by severing income for rebel groups, all conflict will cease. The author contends that reducing the consumer base of these groups will not halt their operations, but rather push them into other sectors, which may perpetuate even worse abuses, such as human trafficking or sexual exploitation.

According to Bergkamp, the EU seems to be under the illusion that suspending mining operations led by rebel groups will automatically improve State income and "magically promote good governance and the rule of law." (Bergkamp 2017).

In addition, in order to be able to export their product into the EU, companies in the mineral supply chain will need to provide evidence of their "responsible" operations. This will inevitably lead to extra costs, which will likely result in lower wages for workers. For smaller industries, these costs may cause unemployment and even force them to close (Bergkamp 2017; Härkönen 2018).

Echoing this concern, Bauchowitz and Carlowitz (2022) argue that the EU regulation on conflict minerals shifts accountability across supply chains to those working in mineral extraction, so that expenses of compliance not only affect companies supplying minerals, but often fall on miners themselves. Additionally, the authors advance that rather than working together to improve the general situation in the country, the approach adopted by the EU encourages companies to disengage from conflict areas altogether (Bauchowitz, and Carlowitz 2022).

As a result, local actors are typically left with the responsibility of ensuring progress on the ground: "Regulatory policy in the Global North leaves dealing with policy outcomes largely to resource-rich countries in the Global South." (Bauchowitz, and Carlowitz 2022, 402).

## ***Combating Child Labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo***

While the EU's engagement in the DRC dates to before the Second Congo War, its commitment to the country's political stability only intensified in the decades after (Vlassenroot and Arnould 2016). While interventions at the time primarily focused on the reconstruction of the country, human rights have always been at the EU's core and continue to be pursued in its efforts to eradicate child labour in the country.

Those efforts range from direct initiatives, such as the removal of children from the country's mining sector to more generalised approaches in the fields of gender equality and human development, for instance, which indirectly feed into the fight against child labour.

This subsection will take a closer look into those initiatives, dividing them into two types of approaches: prevention and response.

### Prevention

Information provided during an interview conducted by the author with the Human Rights Focal Point of the EU Delegation in the DRC, reveals that there are several ongoing initiatives in the DRC, which directly translate into the prevention of child labour. With particular emphasis on community sensitisation, poverty reduction and enhancing the socio-economic development of the country, many of these projects promote income-generating activities to improve peoples' livelihoods (Human Rights Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022).

The mitigation of child labour, however, can be targeted through many different fronts, often times indirectly. This is the case for several measures developed to improve the general HS situation in

the region, which may place their attention on the fields of gender, the environment, security and justice, for instance (Human Rights Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022).

Clearly illustrating this notion is the fact that, as the primary caregivers for children, women and mothers are an essential asset to the fight against child labour. In fact, research has shown that the improved overall condition of women is directly tied to the improvement of their households, including their children's well-being. In recognition of this, the EU assists women, inter alia, through their programme targeting the prevention of gender-based violence, which aims to assist victims and prevent sexual violence by providing vocational training for young men and women (Human Rights Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022).

Additional action is perceived in the field of education, in which the EU is currently working to ensure that children receive at least one quality meal per day. This may act as a pull factor so that children are more likely to attend school, rather than work for their next meal. Additionally, as declared by Commissioner Urpilainen, the Union has supported the reintegration of 2700 children into schools in the South Kivu mining community (Urpilainen 2020). On top of that, by improving the justice sector, the EU aims to reduce women's vulnerability in different economic sectors and increase children's rights overall (Human Rights Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022).

In the DRC, child labour often occurs in artisanal mining, in which children are often exploited by armed groups who finance their operations through conflict minerals. To prevent the extraction of minerals aimed at illegally financing armed conflict, in 2017 the EU adopted its regulation on conflict minerals (EP and Council of the EU 2017b), which encompasses a number of "conflict-affected and high-risk" regions, including the DRC.

Furthermore, the EU has supported the eradication of child labour in the DRC's mining sector by funding several initiatives, such as the "Extractives Global Programmatic Support" aimed at improving the transparency of the mining industry, a multi-partner fund to which the actor has contributed since 2017 (Franssen 2020). In May 2018, the Commission approved a "Strategic Action Plan on Batteries" (EC 2019), which included the promotion of ethical procurement of battery raw materials, particularly cobalt, as well as assistance for businesses who aspire the end child labour (Urpilainen 2020).

In addition to this, the EU is currently working on a multiannual implementation plan as part of the Human Rights and Democracy Envelope for 2023, within which a budget of EUR 2.5 million has been allocated towards the fight against child labour in mining. As divulged by the HR focal point of the EU delegation to the DRC, details regarding the plan's particular axis of intervention remain undecided, however focus will either be placed on a narrow approach to removing children from mines, or a more

comprehensive attempt to reform the supply chain sector with private sector support and, subsequently, promote children's socio-economic reintegration (Human Rights Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022).

**Response**

In her written answer to the parliamentary question posed by Sargentini, Arena and Scholz in 2016, former EU Commissioner for Trade, Ms. Malmström, referenced the EU funded, ITC (International Training Centre) - ILO prevention and rehabilitation project targeting children connected to armed groups or otherwise engaged in the worst forms of child labour in conflict scenarios, as an example of the EU's response to the practice of child labour in the DRC (Malmström 2016).

In addition, as declared by Commissioner Urpilainen on behalf of the Commission, through support provided by the EU, the "Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative" (EITI) sparked the 2018 National Assembly's amendment of the 2002 Mining Code, rendering the exploitation of children in mines illegal, thus, granting the State the legal power to shut down businesses that do not comply with these standards (Urpilainen 2020).

Another major intervention relates to the Union's support to the Panzi foundation, instituted by Peace Nobel Prize winner Dr. Denis Mukwege. In the context of the ongoing conflict in South-Kivu, in the eastern region of the country, the European Parliament is currently funding the "socio-economic reintegration of children and sex-workers living near artisanal mines" project (EurAc 2017).

Since 2016, the EU has been complementing the foundation's efforts to support victims of sexual and gender-based violence, to remove children from the mining sector and to reintegrate these children, as well as those engaged in prostitution, into society (Human Rights Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022).

To do so, the reintegration project aims to boost school attendance rates among child miners, by offering schooling opportunities and professional training to children and adolescents. In addition, the programme ensures that medical assistance is provided to underage sex workers living in mining communities (EurAc 2017).

Determining the extent to which EU child labour initiatives have been effective in the DRC, is no easy task, as many are still currently active. However, if the organisation's past interventions in the country are to serve as any indication, then the most crucial aspect to consider is the importance of understanding the country's complex environment. While development cooperation in the early 2000s (following the

Second Congo War) was focused on conflict prevention and post-war reconstruction, human rights have always been at the core of the EU's intentions (Vlassenroot and Arnould 2016).

By prioritising the improvement of the State's capacity, EU policies, at the time, aimed to end conflict in the country. What the EU failed to take into account, however, was that it was "[...] focused on state-building in a context where there is no state to build [...]", but a "[...] highly dysfunctional and kleptocratic Congolese quasi-state [...]" which has been "[...] hijacked by a political elite with highly questionable personal interests." (Froitzheim, Söderbaum, and Taylor 2011, 65).

Following this line of thought, Vlassenroot and Arnould (2016) allude towards the prevalence of corruption in the country and the notion that it is "[...] not a 'dysfunction' but rather serves a clear political function within the Congolese state." (Vlassenroot and Arnould 2016, 14).

Clearly recognising the country's local particularities, taking into consideration political and institutional factors, is therefore essential to ensure the successful implementation of strategies, including those targeting child labour.

**Table 5:** UN and EU Measures to Combat Child Labour in the DRC

| | **United Nations** | **European Union** |
|---|---|---|
| **Prevention** | • *National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour* developed by UNICEF and the DRC's National Committee to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2012–2025)<br>• *Action Plan to End the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers* implemented by the UN in partnership with MONUSCO and the DRC government (since 2012)<br>• *UN Development Assistance Framework* (2013-2017)<br>• *Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement to Accelerate Action against Child Labour and Forced Labour* funded by the US Department of Labour and implemented by the ILO (since 2017)<br>• *UN Global Compact Network UK project* (since 2018)<br>• ILO and NGO PACT initiative: *COTECCO* (2018-2021)<br>• *Cobalt Action Partnership* (since 2020)<br>• UNICEF *Fund for the Prevention of Child Labour in Mining Communities* (since 2020)<br>• ILO *Decent Work Country Programme* for the DRC (2021-2024)<br>• ILO *Multi Partner Fund* (2021-2030) | • *Conflict Minerals Regulation* (2017)<br>• *European Partnership for Responsible Minerals*<br>• *Extractives Global Programmatic Support* (since 2017)<br>• *Strategic Action Plan on Batteries* (since 2018)<br>• *Multiannual Implementation plan of the Human Rights and Democracy Envelope* (planned for 2023)<br>• Work on community sensitisation, poverty reduction and enhancing socio-economic development in the DRC<br>• *Prevention of Gender-Based Violence Programme*<br>• Reintegration of 2700 children into schools in the South Kivu mining community<br>• Back-to-school campaigns<br>• Provision of school meals |
| **Response** | • *UEPN-DDR's National Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Resettlement (DDR III) plan* implemented by the UN and other international entities (since 2014)<br>• *Plan of Action for the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC* sponsored by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (since 2019)<br>• *Support for the Implementation of Immediate Responses to Deal with the Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on Informal Sector Actors in Kinshasa* established by UNICEF, the World Bank and DRC government (2021-2022) | • EU funded *ITC - ILO Prevention and Rehabilitation Project* (since 2016)<br>• *Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative*<br>• Support to the Panzi foundation and their *Reintegration Project* (since 2016) |

## 4.3 Challenges and Solutions

Despite the universal ratification of ILO Convention No. 182, child labour continues to exploit millions of children across the globe. As put by the ILO Director-General in the context of the V Global Child Labour Conference:

> [...] we became complacent [...] we stopped making child labour and its elimination a key and conscious policy objective nationally and internationally [...] we need to put the political push back into this campaign [...] and ensure that [...] child labour figures in all our approaches (Republic of South Africa, ILO and Alliance 8.7 2022b).

Having brought together relevant stakeholders from around the globe, the V Global Conference was instrumental in paving the path to eliminate child labour. To advance efforts in achieving this goal, a number of recommendations, each with their individual challenges, were brought to the table.

This portion of the chapter provides a detailed description of the suggestions made during the event, many of which overlap with those proposed in the latest ILO-UNICEF report on child labour (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

Achieving universal social protection

As one of the root causes of child labour, chronic poverty cannot be overlooked when addressing the issue. In low- and middle-income countries, nearly one in three children were already living below the poverty level prior the Covid-19 outbreak (ILO-UNICEF 2020). This was aggravated in 2020, so that, during the pandemic, over 142 million children were living in poverty (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

Robust social protection systems can help reduce the number of child labourers, by strengthening social insurance and benefits, thus alleviating socioeconomic instability, poverty and social injustices. However, access to social services, health and education services is only available to children who have been registered at birth. Birth registration is, thus, crucial to preventing many forms of child exploitation and a matter of utmost importance, seen as 237 million children worldwide do not own a birth certificate (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

Ensuring free quality education

School closure provoked by the pandemic affected millions of children worldwide and pushed thousands into child labour (ILO-UNICEF 2020). The disruption of essential services, such as the provision of school meals, contributed to food shortages and financial instability within low-income households, increasing the risk of poverty-driven child labour. Therefore, ensuring free, quality education is crucial to improving children's chances of finding decent work and therefore reducing their need to enter the labour market.

This can be achieved through efforts to synchronise the minimum age of employment with the conclusion of mandatory schooling, eliminating school tuition fees, as well as reducing expenses for school materials and transportation, which can be covered by child benefits (ILO-UNICEF 2020). The EU is currently working to improve school attendance in the DRC through back-to-school campaigns and initiatives to ensure that at least one nutritious meal is served on school days (Human Rights Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022).

However, free education alone cannot solve the blight that is child labour. In fact, evidence suggests that many children are combining work with school (Gatsinzi 2019), refuting the controversial assumption that a child who attends school is, inevitably, not at work. Investing in safer employment opportunities, therefore, becomes crucial when addressing child labour.

The "digital pathway pilot" is an example of an ongoing initiative in the DRC, which aims to provide young adults with the necessary skill set to find appropriate employment and move away from hazardous working conditions, such as child labour in mining, for instance. By providing young people with opportunities for safer employment, such pilot programmes avoid disrupting the economic livelihoods of thousands of families, all the while preventing the worst forms of child labour (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

Ending harmful gender norms

Estimates have shown that when expanding the concept of child labour to include household chores over 21 hours per week, the gender gap between boys and girls affected by child labour is drastically reduced. Girls are especially vulnerable to exploitation in domestic work, which often takes place in foreign households and is typically obscured from the public and, consequently, out of the purview of labour inspectors. Putting an end to gender discrimination is, thus, crucial in ensuring the safety of boys and girls performing household work (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

Educating children on gender equality can help fight harmful gender norms and stereotypes, and provide incentives for children, particularly girls, to stay in school (ILO-UNICEF 2020). UNICEF's Executive Director, Ms. Henrietta Fore, in her contribution to the High-level Dialogue for Action on Child Labour, additionally recommends initiatives to bring awareness towards girls working in the domestic context and financial assistance to encourage families to ensure the education of their daughters (ILO 2021a).

Similarly, special attention should be paid to the economic empowerment of women, for studies have shown that improving the overall conditions of mothers has a positive outcome on child labour reduction itself (Human Rights Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022).

Addressing informality

The humanitarian crisis provoked by the Covid-19 pandemic served to shed light onto the hazards of the informal sector, in which little to no skills are required and supervision is minimal, allowing children to freely enter the labour market. Some of the primary risks of this sector include the lack of appropriate social protection and healthcare (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

The percentage of informality in Western Africa rates over 80%, making the need to transition from the informal to the formal sector a priority. Guaranteeing fair wages for adult employees and their families, particularly in the informal sector, in which child labour is most common, can certainly have an impact on reducing the practice and break the cycle of poverty (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

According to the Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity, Mr. Arekzi Mezhoud, legal intervention is necessary to advance this transition, including the establishment of Trade Unions for workers and the punishment of corporations profiting from the sector (ILO 2021f).

Expanding livelihoods in rural regions

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 82% of child labour occurs in agriculture (ILO-UNICEF 2020). As such, improving a dynamic economy in rural areas is key to reducing child labour. Social protection policies specifically designed for these regions are essential in ensuring the rights of rural populations. Funding professional training programmes for youth in these areas can boost productivity and the quality of manufacturing, while the development of basic infrastructures, such as water and energy systems can reduce the need to employ children for chores, such as collecting and carrying water (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

Sustainable farming practices, such as the "Clear Cotton" Project, for instance, are already contributing to this cause.

Eliminating child labour in global supply chains

The reduction of child labour in supply chains requires thorough analysis before measures can be implemented, as attempts to reform the economy could severely alter the power relations of the country and potentially contribute to disparities and unsustainability (Sovacool 2019). Bearing in mind the complexity of the issue, responsible sourcing policies must take the dependency on mining of thousands of Congolese families into account. However, due to human rights concerns, in recent years many companies have restrained from sourcing cobalt from the DRC altogether (Baumann-Pauly 2020; Charlick-Delgado 2022).

In his study, Sovacool (2019) concludes that disengaging from ASM is likely to do more harm to local mining communities than good. Therefore, ASM must be sustained and coupled with social support systems and better enforcement of national legislation, in order to alleviate the involvement of children in mining activities, rather than provoking it by severing what little income families rely on (IPIS 2020).

That being said, it is vital to amplify consumer confidence regarding cobalt extraction origins in the DRC (Charlick-Delgado 2022). This is where the formalisation of ASM steps in. It entails the mitigation of health and safety hazards, the improvement of socio-economic conditions within mining communities, and the sustainability of cobalt mining (Baumann-Pauly 2020).

However, some researchers are sceptical of this. Calvão, Mcdonald and Bolay (2021), for instance, see "corporate outsourcing of responsibility" as one of the major issues of ASM formalisation. This implies the transferal of responsibility and mining risks, from corporations to miners themselves. In addition, formalisation does not halt corruption, as miners continue to be extorted by national security groups, such as FARDC, who force them to pay fees to enter the mines although they possess official permits (Calvão, Mcdonald, and Bolay 2021). Similarly, Baumann-Pauly (2020) highlights the fact that there is no true understanding on what "ASM formalisation" and "responsible ASM" actually entail, thus hampering its effectiveness.

According to research conducted by Boersma (2017), the most viable solution to child labour in global supply chains must rely on multistakeholder action based on an integrated and contextualised approach, centered on prevention and rehabilitation. The "Cobalt Industry Responsible Assessment

Framework" (CIRAF) serves as an example of a flexible tool to assess business due diligence within the cobalt industry and ensure the responsible production and sourcing of cobalt (Cobalt Institute 2021).

Responsible mineral sourcing in the DRC comes with its own challenges. Accused, by NGO Global Witness, of facilitating the laundering of minerals derived from mines operated by rebel groups (Global Witness 2022), the mineral verification scheme ITSCI is presented with such challenges daily. Ensuring that minerals sourced from high-risk areas are free from conflict and human rights abuses is an extremely difficult task, which is bound to encounter its own shortcomings.

On this topic, Ms. Charlick-Delgado from the UN Global Compact Network UK, reiterates that, when it comes to ITSCI, mistakes are expected as "[...] it's down to people [and] humans make errors." Having partaken in consultation with ITSCI themselves, the Senior Programme Manager reveals that on occasion those transporting minerals to verification points will be untruthful regarding the origins of minerals, thus undermining the work that is being done. Another concern are the tags themselves, as these run the risk of being stolen, attached to other bags, and exported under the pretense of official verification, when that is not the case. In addition, there are instances in which employees are not paid and wages withdrawn, inadvertently incentivising corruption (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

Additionally, in 2020, UNICEF produced a report analysing the risks of child labour in global supply chains and mapping these risks by supply chain tiers. These tiers pose unique challenges to companies striving to eliminate child labour, such as the difficulty in identifying members of the supply chain, detecting child labour and, ultimately, implementing reformed practices, often due to the difficult traceability of products (UNICEF 2020a).

Furthermore, results indicated that traditional responses to child labour in supply chains typically address Tier 1 - which in the case of cobalt supply chains relates to electronic product manufacture – as the connection between buyer and supplier is easily traceable and practice reformation simply achieved. However, Tier 1 is unlikely to house great risks for children, thus restricting any interventions at this level. It is, therefore, fundamental that companies extend their range of action to other tiers of their supply chains, where risks for children are higher (UNICEF 2020a).

In addition, the elimination of child labour in one supply chain through monitoring programmes, for instance, may cause the displacement of children to another supply chain, moving them from one farm or mine to another, rather than avoiding the issue altogether. Similarly, interventions in one specific sector may lead children to enter another sector, where they can continue to work without supervision. According to the UNICEF report, in Côte d'Ivoire up to 70% of cocoa farmers are unaffected by monitoring initiatives as they operate through informal third parties, thus complicating traceability (UNICEF 2020a).

On top of that, the fact that a considerable portion of child labour occurs in the domestic environment (ILO-UNICEF 2020), suggests that, for those in question, there is no link to global supply chains and that, therefore, they are not affected by due diligence legislations. Accordingly, certain legislative action is rendered ineffective when addressing children in this particular context (ILO 2021a). This, in turn, indicates the importance of focusing on a multipronged approach to the issue, which encompasses efforts in a wide variety of sectors.

Adopting a context-specific approach

Improving awareness and understanding of the complex and unique environment of each region is essential when targeting child labour. In fragile countries, the risk of child labour is increased by the ensuing relocation and disturbances to livelihoods, education, social protection and family support systems, for instance (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

One out of four children worldwide resides in a conflict afflicted state, thus, in crisis situations special emphasis should be given to the risks of sexual exploitation, human trafficking and child labour (ILO-UNICEF 2020). As such, measures to end child labour should feature across all levels of humanitarian action and contemplate the dimensions of development, resilience, peace and security (ILO-UNICEF 2020).

In the case of the DRC, the division of the mining sector, the presence of armed groups in mining sites and the lack of registered children, pose clear obstacles to the performances of the UN and the EU. As suggested by the Human Rights Focal Point of the EU to the DRC, the magnitude of the problem should not be underestimated:

> [...] it is a very big challenge, you have to be aware of the size of the country, the level of poverty that we are facing. We, as development actors, need to be quite modest and realistic in what our support, which remains minor in regard to the immensity of the challenge, can achieve (Human Rights Focal Point of the Delegation of the EU to the DRC 2022).

Research conducted by Cheruga, Liron and Canavera (2020) indicates that child labour reduction measures in ASM implemented in Asia have had no success when applied to Sub-Saharan Africa, suggesting the inefficiency of transferring international policies and laws from one particular region to another. It is, thus, crucial that future measures be modified and adapted from abstract concepts to contextualised solutions.

Strengthening international cooperation

Albeit the universal ratification of international conventions on child labour, progress remains disproportionate in regard to the immensity of the problem:

> [...] it's not acceptable to have the scale of the problem of child labour that we have globally in 2022 [...] we need to have a better impact at a faster rate and these initiatives are falling short [...] something has to change, the narrative has to change, the approach has to change [...] (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

According to Ms. Charlick-Delgado, these shortcomings apply not only to the private sector, but to international development actors alike. For decades, funding has been "pumped" into countries, such as the DRC, yet impacts remain uneven and seldom reach local communities.

Hence the importance of ensuring local business owners "get a seat at the table" when new country programmes are drafted (Charlick-Delgado 2022). Governments alone cannot address the issue, neither can civil society, therefore more emphasis must be placed on giving local firms a voice in these matters.

The Senior Programme Manager goes on to stress the fact that although the private sector on the ground has the financial resources to accelerate action, it often lacks the skills and knowledge to properly utilise them. As such, to achieve genuine progress, it is essential that local efforts are aligned with international core standards and skills.

Similarly, due to diverse local contexts, understanding on phenomena, such as child labour, on the ground may not match understanding at international level. Therefore, special attention should be paid to harmonising "the level of awareness and understanding" between international partners and local actors. This can be done by ensuring that different tools and frameworks are readily accessible to all multistakeholders (Charlick-Delgado 2022).

## Final Considerations

For years, global institutions such as the UN and the EU have worked towards enforcing child labour laws and reducing the practice worldwide. These organisations have played an active role in preventing and responding to the issue in the DRC, through development assistance programmes and the provision of technical and vocational training to reintegrate minors removed from labour, for instance.

Often in close cooperation with the private sector, both the UN and the EU have adopted, among others, measures centred around two major themes, the importance of which has been recurrently stated in the last Child Labour Conferences: social protection and education.

While the UN has aimed to achieve Target 8.7 mostly through direct measures, such as a number of action plans to counter child labour in the country, the EU has taken a broader approach focused on addressing the root causes of the practice - through the promotion of gender equality and poverty reduction - in addition to targeted child labour prevention programmes.

Aside from the internationally binding ILO Child Labour Conventions, the UN lacks the means to legally enforce its plans and guidelines and is, thus, reliant on moral persuasion. Whereas the EU has clearly made use of its instruments to establish regulations on conflict minerals and import bans on products manufactured by child labour, for instance.

Despite these differences, it is clear that both agents share the same final goal: sustainably eradicating child labour in all of its forms. In doing so, the UN and the EU strive to ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms of all children, an ambition which clearly echoes their commitment to the promotion of HS.

However, achieving this goal is no simple task, as both the UN and the EU are often faced with challenges, which constrain their performances as HS providers. Ranging from poor access to social services due to low birth registration rates to the difficult traceability of cobalt, these challenges serve as a reminder that the practice of child labour must be dealt with as a systemic issue, which requires a multifaceted approach.

Although there is no panacea for child labour, it is evident that any sustainable solutions must stem from collective efforts. In order to devise strategies that translate the end goal into practical action, recommendations made during the latest child labour conference must complement each other, while prioritising a multistakeholder approach which takes into account the underlying roots of social, economic, and political threats facing a particular region.

In the words of Commissioner Urpilainen, "[C]hild labour is a complex root problem with many root causes and there is no silver bullet, however there are solutions, and we are very committed to find those solutions." (Republic of South Africa, ILO and Alliance 8.7 2022b).

This chapter has endeavoured to portray a clear image of UN and EU efforts to eliminate the practice of child labour, in particular in the DRC in the timeframe between 2016 and 2022. Without losing sight of the challenges posed by the scope of the phenomenon, practical approaches to its effective eradication were also contemplated. As such, it aimed to address the following research question: Which

measures have been adopted by the UN and the EU to combat child labour in the DRC between 2016 and 2022?

While maintaining the roles of the UN and the EU as promoters of HS in focus, the following chapter will delve into a comparative analysis of their narratives to determine the manner, in which the humancentric concern figures within the discourses of these actors.

# CHAPTER V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND EUROPEAN UNION NARRATIVES ON HUMAN SECURITY: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

The previous chapter explored the action taken by the UN and the EU in reducing the practice of child labour, particularly in the DRC within the period of 2016 to 2022. In addition, while cognisant of the challenges posed by the immensity of the issue, practical solutions to its sustainable mitigation were contemplated.

In doing so, the chapter partially addressed the main research question this dissertation seeks to answer: How have the UN and the EU, as promoters of HS, acted in regard to child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, between 2016 and 2022?

In a bid to advance a more grounded response to this question, the present chapter endeavours to analyse, compare, and contrast the narratives of both the UN and the EU on the concept of HS. While gaining insight on the manner, in which the concern for the individual is perceived within UN and EU discourses, this section strives to determine whether the essence of these narratives is coherent among both actors and consistent throughout a series of different issues.

That being said, this final chapter aims to unpack the following research question: How is the concern for HS framed within the narratives of the UN and the EU between 2016 and 2022?

In order to answer this question, qualitative thematic analysis of the discourses of both the UN and the EU was conducted on issues ranging from human rights and democracy to child labour and sustainable development, for instance.

Before proceeding with a detailed comparative analysis of narratives, the methods and framework applied to this study will be briefly outlined. In the final section, results obtained will be discussed and the research question answered.

## 5.1 Framework and Methods

The present chapter ventures to analyse and compare the narratives of the UN and the EU on the concept of HS, via comparative thematic analysis. In doing so, it will contemplate the discourses of these actors across different agendas, ranging from human rights to security. As such, the present chapter

aims to address the following research question: How is the concern for HS framed within the narratives of the UN and the EU between 2016 and 2022?

Thematic analysis is most useful when aiming to identify common themes and patterns across large sets of qualitative data. By sorting the data into broad themes or categories, thematic analysis allows for the construction of meaning which is then ascribed to the data through analysis itself (Schreier 2012; Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2014).

As opposed to the quantitative approach, qualitative comparisons in thematic analyses do not rely upon the numeric quantification of themes. Rather they involve the qualitative appraisal of the essence of narratives, identifying both similarities and discrepancies between the different data sets. In that sense, comparative analysis can enhance comprehension and provide insight onto specific phenomena (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2014). In this case, qualitative comparison of the data will advance an answer to the research question posed.

The material selected for this study includes official documents, such as strategies, proposals, reports, and resolutions, as well as official communications, such as press releases and open declarations, produced by the UN and the EU within the period of 2016 to 2022. To determine whether the humancentric concern is, not only consistent among both organisations, but also coherent across several different topics, an array of documents published by these actors were chosen as units of analysis. These range from reports on HS and human development[36], human rights and democracy[37]; strategies on security[38] and child rights[39]; to official statements made on the occasion of the world day against child labour[40], for instance.

The analysis itself followed the six steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). However, a combination of both the inductive (data-driven) and deductive (concept-driven) approaches were utilised. As such, the data were scanned to identify patterns, which were then turned into initial codes established to describe their meaning. These codes were, subsequently, translated into broader themes and added to others adapted from the theoretical framework applied to this dissertation. These were then named and defined prior to writing the analysis.

Using the theoretical framework as guideline, allows the researcher to delve into the data with a preconceived notion of what to expect. Thus, it is less likely that major themes present in the framework will go unnoticed. Therefore, the deductive approach promotes the analysis of data through the "prism"

[36] See UNDP 2022; UN 2021a; and UNDP 2016, for instance.
[37] See, for example, UN 2021c; EEAS 2020; and EU 2018.
[38] For instance, EU 2016; EU 2019; and EC 2020e.
[39] EC 2021m; EU 2017b; and ILO 2021g.
[40] EEAS 2017d; and EEAS 2019, for example.

of the HS theory, which brings us one step closer to answering the research question. Instead, the inductive approach allows themes to emerge naturally from the data, thus avoiding biased results. The application of both approaches ensures that nuances in the data are not overlooked (Silbergh 2001).

The adoption of resolution 66/290 by the General Assembly in 2012 presents itself as a crucial turning point in the implementation of a HS approach for the UN, for it was at this stage that consensus on the true meaning of the concept was reached. As stated in paragraph 3 of the resolution, HS is described as "[...] an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people." (UN General Assembly 2012, 1).

Against this backdrop, the General Assembly has endorsed the notion of HS as a "[...] people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented [...]" approach that "[...] strengthen[s] the protection and empowerment of all people and all communities;" (UN General Assembly 2012, 1).

These fundamental principles are present across the entirety of UN and EU discourses contemplated within this study. Therefore, they have served as basis for the thematic categories, which compose its coding frame. A detailed description of these categories, which for the sake of reliability will be applied to both actors, will be provided in the following section.

## 5.2 Comparative Analysis

A deductive approach to the data clearly established five major themes informed by the HS theory. These are "people-centred", "comprehensive approach", "context-specific", "prevention-oriented", and "protection and empowerment".

These categories reflect the general components of the HS paradigm, which is, first and foremost, centred around the individual's security, rooted in a comprehensive, contextualised and preventive response, while striving to protect and empower individuals and their communities (Tadjabakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; UNTFHS 2016).

Nevertheless, an inductive appraisal of the material collected reiterated the need for the inclusion of two further categories, namely "multidimensional threats" and "common responsibility".

The understanding that human insecurities are multidimensional was introduced in the UNDP report of 1994, when the concept of HS was first introduced within the UN. Therefore, it is essential to an analysis based on this theory. Such interconnected threats require an equally interconnected response, hence the need to share the responsibility when addressing such risks.

These seven themes are present across all discourses of the UN and the EU alike. Ranging from issues such as sustainable development and security, to human rights and child labour, all discourses echo these concerns whether directly or indirectly.

### *People-centred*

As inherently people-centred, HS places the human being at the centre of its analysis. In doing so, it assigns equal emphasis to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, taking into consideration a wide variety of circumstances that threaten people's lives, livelihoods, and sense of dignity, especially those who are most at risk (Buzan, and Hansen 2009; Tadjabakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; Trachsler 2011; UN 2009; UNTFHS 2016).

The allocation of the individual as referent object of security, has percolated the discourses of both the UN and the EU, which are, first and foremost, rooted in the primacy and indivisibility of human rights for all people, wherever these may be.

> Human rights are about real people, each one with their own story to tell. [...] Working for human rights is working for millions of people all around the world. [...] by the simple virtue of our shared humanity, we are all universally afforded inalienable rights (EU 2017c, 5).

> [...] when we expand rights for some, the whole of society benefits from it. [...] There is no sustainable security without human rights for all (EU 2018, 6).

> Universal human development must enable all people—regardless of their age, citizenship, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or any other identity—to expand their capabilities fully and put those capabilities to use. [...] development is of the people, by the people and for the people. [...] Human development requires recognizing that every life is equally valuable and that human development for everyone must start with those farthest behind (UNDP 2016, 169).

Focusing on "those farthest behind" became increasingly pertinent in the aftermath of the global Covid-19 pandemic, which took a devastating toll on society's weakest members (United Nations 2021a). While advocating for a human-rights based approach, the UN Secretary-General's policy brief on post pandemic recovery, highlights that any policy recommendations made should:

> [...] contribute to the economic advancement of all people, including children and their families, persons of working age and older persons, women, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees and others in vulnerable situations (United Nations 2021a, 8).

Efforts to protect the most vulnerable focus primarily on ensuring the rights of children, as they are key to a sustainable future:

> Supporting children from an early age and throughout their childhood is of paramount importance with a view to building a sustainable, equal, inclusive and competitive knowledge economy and a fair society (EC 2021k, 1).

> Our children are the most vulnerable citizens in our societies. They are the present and the future of our world. We will stand up to our commitment and leave no child behind (EEAS 2017a).

> We do all this and more because we are convinced that investing in children throughout their journey to adulthood is first and foremost a moral duty towards them. But it is also an essential investment in a better future for all of us (EEAS 2018a).

> Make our collective future – our children – first in line for investment and last in line for cuts (UNICEF 2021b, 5).

Children impacted by armed conflict and disaster are exceptionally vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour (EEAS 2017b; ILO 2017e).

Home to a substantial number of active armed groups, the DRC is one of the most conflict-ridden countries in the world. The involvement of these groups in unauthorised mining sites, often leads to the exploitation and illegal recruitment of children, who find themselves as miners in war-torn regions. In this context, children are exposed to a number of hazardous situations, which endanger and jeopardise their future (EEAS 2017b; ILO 2017e).

That being said, in order to fully enjoy their fundamental rights, children must be free from all forms of child labour. Protecting the rights of all children, therefore, depends on the elimination of child labour worldwide.

The achievement of this goal is a priority for both the UN and the EU.

> [...] child labour is a violation of a basic human right, and our goal must be that every child, everywhere is free from it. We cannot rest until that happens (UN 2022).

> The interests and the rights of children must be safeguarded and protected at all times (EEAS 2018a).
> Every girl and every boy deserves a childhood and it is our responsibility [...] to make sure that they are never deprived of this right [...] no child should be left behind (EEAS 2017a).

Although both organisations pursue a human-centred discourse, the term "human security" itself is only ever invoked by the UN (UN 2021c; UNDP 2016; UNDP 2022).

In the Secretary-General's report "New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene" (UNDP 2022), the concept is advanced as being about "[...] living free from want, free from fear and free from indignity. It is about protecting what we humans care most about in our lives." (UNDP 2022, 15).

This definition is never referenced within the EU's discourse, however, the ideals contained within it are present, for instance, in the Union's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy from 2016. In her foreword, Federica Mogherini, former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, states:

> This Global Strategy will guide us in our daily work towards a Union that truly meets its citizens' needs, hopes and aspirations [...] (EU 2016, 5).

This citation not only reiterates the EU's concern for the security of its citizens and, thereby, the people-centred nature of its discourse, it also extends that concern to include their "needs, hopes and aspirations."

The employment of these words bridges the EU discourse with that of HS, as it clearly echoes the concept's ambition of expanding freedoms and enhancing opportunities, often termed "freedom from want" and "freedom from indignity".

Ensuring the full potential of human lives is also at the core of the UN's human development discourse. Former UN Development Programme Administrator, Helen Clark, in her foreword to the UN Human Development Report of 2016, posited that:

> Human development is all about human freedoms: freedom to realize the full potential of every human life, not just of a few, nor of most, but of all lives in every corner of the world—now and in the future (UNDP 2016, iii).

Similarly, the EU promotes an understanding that human development cannot be achieved without the respect for all human rights.

> [...] the full enjoyment of all human rights, be they civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, by all, is a pre-condition for inclusive and sustainable development (Council of the EU 2022d, 16).

***Multidimensional Threats***

As a comprehensive framework, HS allows for a multidimensional understanding of threats facing the international community in the 21st century (UNDP 1994; UN 2009; UNTFHS 2016).

This broadened perspective includes the root causes of different insecurities, such as those linked to the economic, food, health, environmental, personal, communal, and political security of individuals and their communities (Tadjabakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; Tzifakis 2011; UNDP 1994).

The following table exemplifies these different human insecurities and their potential root causes.

**Table 6:** Potential Human Security Threats and their Root Causes

| TYPE OF INSECURITY | ROOT CAUSES |
|---|---|
| Economic insecurity | Persistent poverty, unemployment, lack of access to credit and other economic opportunities |
| Food insecurity | Hunger, famine, sudden rise in food prices |
| Health insecurity | Epidemics, malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to basic health care |
| Environmental insecurity | Environmental degradation, resource depletion, natural disasters |
| Personal insecurity | Physical violence in all its forms, human trafficking, child labour |
| Community insecurity | Inter-ethnic, religious and other identity-based tensions, crime, terrorism |
| Political insecurity | Political repression, human rights violations, lack of rule of law and justice |

Source: UNTFHS 2016, 7.

The levels of complexity and interdependence between different insecurities are worthy of notice when contemplating appropriate responses. Numerous security threats are entangled to such an extent, that to effectively mitigate one aspect, one must first address several other.

Armed conflict and war, for instance, can provoke inequality and poverty, which in turn exacerbate resource shortages and deficiencies in basic healthcare and access to education (UN 2009). Such vulnerabilities, in themselves, can heighten the risks of human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual abuse and child labour.

Take the latter as an example. As a highly complex issue, child labour not only results from a combination of the human insecurities mentioned above but serves to further propagate those same

insecurities. As put by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) Deputy Director-General, Daniel Gustafson, on the occasion of the World Day against Child Labour in 2018:

> Children who work long hours are likely to continue to swell the ranks of the hungry and poor [...] As their families depend on their work, this deprives the children of the opportunity to go to school, which in turn prevents them from getting decent jobs and income in the future (UN 2018).

As a result, not only does child labour jeopardise the health of millions of children, so does it undercut any efforts to alleviate world hunger and poverty (UN 2018). Like the majority of threats facing the modern world, child labour can therefore not be targeted through individual initiatives but must rather be addressed in an all-encompassing approach (UNDP 2016).

The multidimensionality of threats goes beyond the interdependence of root causes and types of insecurities to include the aspect of transnationalism. In an increasingly interconnected society, security threats have begun to blur the lines between the external and internal security dimensions. Conflict at the regional level can easily escalate into an international concern.

Therefore, as the margins of national territory become less salient, insecurities, may these be personal, local, regional or global, are increasingly perceived as threats to international peace and stability. Borders can no longer contain innately transnational phenomena, such as human trafficking, terrorism, and environmental degradation, all of which defy human rights worldwide (EEAS 2018a).

In addition, new forms of insecurities are on the rise, such as cybercrime and hybrid threats, further challenging the limits of physical space (Council of the EU 2022d; EEAS 2020; EU 2018; Fiott and Lindstrom 2021). These types of security threats "[...] feed on the ability to work cross-border and on inter-connectivity; they exploit the blurring of the boundaries between the physical and digital world; [and] exploit vulnerable groups, social and economic divergences." (EC 2020e, 1).

Global challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, violent conflict and mass migration have illustrated how interwoven the world's problems truly are (EC 2021l).

> The widespread impact of the pandemic continues to deepen [...] increasing poverty, entrenching inequality and threatening the rights of children like never before (UN 2021b).

> The severe socioeconomic impact of the disease has increased the risks of child labour, child sexual exploitation, trafficking and smuggling, child marriage and the enrolment of children in criminal and armed

> groups. In addition, ongoing crises caused by conflict, food insecurity, climate change, natural disasters and political instability continue to expose children to multiple forms of violence (UN, General Assembly 2021, 3).

> Epidemics, violence, climate change and natural disasters can quickly undermine the progress of individuals who have exited poverty and push poor people into more extreme poverty. They can also generate new deprivations (UNDP 2016, 5).

Furthermore, multidimensional threats not only transcend space, but also time, as human deprivations can often originate before birth (UNDP 2016).

The environmental impacts of mining, for instance, can have detrimental health impacts for pregnant women and drastically increase the risk of abnormalities in birth. Additionally, the opportunities these women are given throughout their lives, have an influential role in the future prospects of their unborn children (UNDP 2016).

> The deprivations of the current generation can carry over to the next generation. Parents' education, health and income can greatly affect the opportunities available to their children (UNDP 2016, 5).

> The intergenerational transmission of social exclusion jeopardises social cohesion over generations [...] (EC 2021k, 20).

In the case of the DRC, such deprivations can prompt children to enrol in armed and rebel groups, in the hopes of escaping intergenerational poverty and social exclusion.

> Most of the children are forcibly abducted from their homes, but others also enrol because of a lack of opportunities (EEAS 2017b).

As such, any sustainable efforts to tackle child labour in the DRC must take these realities into account when addressing its root causes. This serves to highlight the multidimensional character of child labour and the transnational, cross-generational nature of its repercussions.

### *Comprehensive Approach*

The previous category exemplifying the dependency between different types of insecurities, reveals that threats to HS cannot be achieved through siloed approaches. Effective action must, therefore, be comprehensive and coherent.

In ensuring individuals' rights to be free from want, fear and indignity, the HS approach combines the security, development, and human rights agendas, stressing the importance of integrated, multistakeholder responses (Tadjabakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; UNDP 1994).

In essence, HS, as an operational tool, delivers a framework of action which addresses the entirety of risks to individuals' security within and beyond borders, focusing on their underlying causes, while promoting coordinated and effective solutions to those risks (UN 2009; UNTFHS 2016).

The need for a comprehensive approach is justified by the inefficiency of targeting today's interdependent security challenges through separate initiatives.

> [...] efforts remain largely compartmentalized, dealing separately with climate change, biodiversity loss, conflicts, migration, refugees, pandemics and data protection. Those efforts should be strengthened, but tackling them in silos appears insufficient [...] (UNDP 2022, 7).

> These [interconnected] challenges can only be addressed by an equally interconnected response (UN 2021c, 3).

The significance of "coherence" in such an "interconnected response", thus, becomes decisive in addressing the insecurities facing the modern world. As put by Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Representative for Human Rights, in the context of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024:

> Today, the need for effective, coherent, strong collective action on human rights and democracy is even more imperative. [...] Coherence and consistency on what we do externally and what we do internally are vital, not just for our credibility, but because human rights are universal and democracy provides the best means to protect those rights (EEAS 2020, 6).

As underscored in this excerpt, the element of coherence is equally as imperative to ensuring the universality of human rights, as it is to upholding the EU's credibility as a global actor:

> Increasing the EU's capacity to be a global actor also means ensuring consistency between the EU's external actions and its internal policies. A united and coherent EU voice in global fora is essential in order to maximise our role and influence. [...] The EU must 'deliver as one' to 'succeed as one' (EC 2021l, 2).

> [...] the EU needs a more unified strategic approach to the security challenges and threats it faces and the evident strategic competition that is defining international politics presently (Fiott and Lindstrom 2021, 5).

As a holistic concept, HS promotes coherence by embracing freedom from fear, want and indignity, thus incorporating the security, development and human rights agendas within its field of action. This is reflected in the Commission's Joint Communication "Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa":

> The EU should adapt and deepen its support to African peace efforts with a focus on an integrated approach to conflict and crises, [...] and better linking humanitarian, development, peace and security efforts (EC 2020f, 12).

In a similar motion, the UN Development Assistance Framework Guidance orients action to achieve Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and:

> [...] advances the ambition of more coherent programming approaches that bring together development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding agendas (UNDG 2017, 6).

Additionally, the HS approach endorses coherence by contemplating the entirety of risks to the security of individuals. In the case of child labour, considering all of its drivers is vital to achieve its successful eradication:

> Effective action against child labour must address the full range of vulnerabilities that children face, and requires the implementation of policies and programmes that can contribute to the elimination of child labour through sustainable solutions to address its root causes (ILO and UNICEF 2020, 5).

> Achieving the 2025 deadline for ending child labour in all its forms under Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be possible without adequate consideration to the risks of child labour associated with climate change, situations of crisis and informality (ILO 2022b, iv).

Moreover, efforts to end child labour must take its transnational character into account. In a statement made on the occasion of the 2017 Universal Children's Day, Federica Mogherini, alongside several other EU Commissioners, underlined the EU's determination to eliminate child labour across the globe:

> [...] we are working every day, on all fronts and around the world (EEAS 2017a).

Likewise, the UN has been devoted to the global fight against child labour through its many agencies for years:

> Now and in the years to come, we will continue to strive to create a world where children's rights are fully realized, and where we open opportunities for every child (UNICEF 2021b, 2).

As previously discussed, human insecurities in the 21st century cannot be addressed through fragmented initiatives. Just as different threats are interconnected, so are different sectors (EU 2017b). This interdependence calls for the "mainstreaming" of human rights, including the rights of the child, into all policy sectors and programmes (ILO and UNICEF 2020).

By systematically including these rights into all aspects of its action, the EU proposes that "traditional child focused sectors", such as education and health, be extended to comprise all other sectors, ranging from trade and investment to energy and climate change, as "[T]here are very few, if any, child-neutral policies or programmes: most have impacts on children directly or indirectly, positively or negatively." (EU 2017b, 11).

This dependency between policies was echoed by European Commission Vice President Šuica in 2021, in her remark on the impact of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child:

> We have adopted an approach based on the premise that almost all our policies will impact children in one way or another. Therefore, we have taken care to ensure that the EU strategy is comprehensive and looks at all EU policy areas, which are relevant for child rights (EEAS 2021e).

Due to this strong correlation, efforts to efficiently address child labour must be "integrated", rather than restricted.

> [...] child labour cannot be eradicated in isolation, with a narrow sectoral or product focus, or through limited project interventions. Rather, accumulated evidence and experience underscores the importance of a wider focus on systemic change and the eradication of root causes, through the integration of child labour concerns into coherent, integrated economic and social development policies (ILO 2018e, 15).

> Ending child labour and modern slavery will require integrated thinking, coordinated actions, effective policy-making and efficient use of resources (ILO 2016, 1).

In the DRC, poverty is one of the main drivers of child labour. Thus, rather than attending school, many children from low-income households, find themselves forced to work. However, merely improving school attendance rates is not enough to deal with the complexity of the issue, as children may be in school during the morning and working during the afternoon, for instance.

It is therefore critical that child labour programmes, in addition to education, address general issues such as healthcare, social protection, public awareness, community empowerment, to name but a few (Republic of South Africa, ILO and Alliance 8.7 2022b).

As such, the eradication of child labour requires a multi-pronged approach, which promotes coherence among different policies and instruments alike.

> [...] there is no single "optimal" social protection instrument for addressing child labour; rather, the range of contingencies associated with child labour needs to be addressed by a combination of instruments within an integrated systems approach (ILO 2018e, 49).

> Achieving the objectives [promoting human rights and democracy] will require the systematic, and coordinated use of the full range of instruments at the EU's disposal (EEAS 2020).

The global pandemic served as a stark reminder of how reliant human beings are on each other. Although the outbreak was partially alleviated by international collaboration, it served to shed light onto significant weaknesses in the efficacy of multilateral action (UN 2021c).

Therefore, an indispensable component of the comprehensive approach must be its multistakeholder response:

> We need the insights and perspectives of all, if we are to create the inclusive, resilient and gender-equal societies we need to address the climate crisis and other global challenges (UN 2020).

> Only through joining forces, sharing knowledge and coordinating actions will it be possible to achieve the extremely ambitious Target 8.7 (ILO 2016, 3).

> [...] we are most effective when all are harnessed to support each other (EC 2020e, 6).

Appropriate action against child labour, thus, calls for the involvement of a variety of actors, ranging from governments, local authorities, teachers, employers, parents and children themselves (UNICEF 2020; EU 2017b). Assembling these key players:

> [...] through multi-stakeholder engagement initiatives to identify and coordinate actions can help ensure their ultimate effectiveness and sustainability (ILO 2018e, 12).

### *Context-specific*

HS recognises that levels of insecurity fluctuate greatly depending on their environment. Therefore, it considers the effects of local, national, regional, and international factors on a particular scenario and develops flexible, tailored solutions that are sensitive to the specific problems they aim to solve (Alkire 2003; Tadjbakhsh 2013; UNDP 1994).

As such, the HS approach allows for the creation of effective solutions that are in line with the local environment and capabilities (UN 2009; UNTFHS 2016).

Albeit the importance of universal policies to enhance human development, particularly for marginalised populations (UNDP 2016), ensuring that those left behind actually benefit from such policies is not always an easy task.

Several challenges arise when developing universal policies for practical application. These range from geographical complications to difficulties in addressing the special needs of persons with disabilities (UNDP 2016).

Regardless of the adoption of universal healthcare, for instance, the geographic conditions of a country may impede the establishment of universally accessible healthcare facilities. The same goes for universal primary education. Despite being "universal", the level of educational quality offered in schools may vary between wealthy and underprivileged areas (UNDP 2016).

The difficulty in ensuring truly universal policies is equally perceived when attempting to reduce the occurrence of child labour. Recent data suggests that around 70% of child labour in Africa occurs in the agricultural sector, in which often children are employed by their own family members (UN 2022). Work in the rural sector, therefore, often goes unnoticed, making it difficult for authorities to address the issue. In contrast to child labour in global supply chains, child labour in the production of local goods is less likely to attract public attention (ILO-UNICEF 2020; UN 2022).

That being said, international campaigns for the elimination of child labour in supply chains, inevitably, have disputed effectiveness in reducing the phenomenon in this particular context (Zamfir 2018).

Furthermore, child labour on farms and in fields has started to increase after years of stable reduction, in part due to an upsurge in conflicts and climate-related disasters (UN 2018). The strong link between child labour and crises, such as armed conflict and mass migration is addressed throughout UN and EU discourses (EEAS 2017a; EEAS 2017d; EEAS 2019; UN 2017b; Zamfir 2018).

> In areas affected by conflict and disaster, homes and schools are often destroyed. Many families lose their means to earn a living. Family and social protection systems break down and increase the risk of child labour (ILO 2017e).

> The sheer scale of today's complex crises, the vast numbers of children caught up in them, and the strong evidence of the link between crisis and child labour, all serve to underscore the critical importance of addressing the risk of child labour in crisis settings (ILO 2022b, 11).

This serves to reiterate the fact that different types of vulnerabilities are particular to different contexts. As such, to hasten progress towards the fight against child labour, it is vital that interventions address a wide scope of local, regional and global contexts (Council of the EU 2022e; EEAS 2019; ILO 2016; UNDG 2017).

> To accelerate action on forced labour and child labour, strategic programming is needed. This can be achieved by leveraging opportunities at the national, regional and global levels with a strategic focus on where and how development cooperation interventions can make the greatest contribution (ILO n.d.c., 3).

Additionally, in his introduction to the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, Eamon Gilmore echoes the importance of ensuring that practical measures respect national circumstances, needs, capabilities and legislation (Council of the EU 2022e; UN 2021a).

> It will be up to the more than 140 EU Delegations and Member State Embassies across the world to translate the Action Plan from paper into practice, through a range of actions tailored for local needs and circumstances. (EEAS 2020, 5).

The need for a context-specific approach is equally reflected within the EU's discourse regarding some of its child protection measures. While access to education is improved for Syrian children relocated by conflict, for those involved in dangerous forms of child labour in Bangladesh or the Philippines, a "community-based" approach is required (EEAS 2017a; EEAS 2017c; EEAS 2017d; EEAS 2018b).

Likewise, support for the reintegration of children from different regions assumes multiple shapes. While development projects aim to reintegrate domestic child labourers in Mauritania, for Congolese children affected by armed conflict, aid comes in the form of physical and psychological assistance (EEAS 2017a; EEAS 2017c; EEAS 2017d; EEAS 2018b).

> The EU is taking concrete steps to advance children's rights around the globe. Examples include the provision of over €700 million to provide access to education for children displaced by the Syria crisis. In the Philippines, we support a community-based approach in combatting child labour in hazardous industries such as sugarcane plantations and mining. In Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Palestinian Territories, Sudan and Lebanon we support actions to help children associated with armed forces, groups and gangs who've suffered from violence (EEAS 2017c).

As a highly corrupt country, the DRC is plagued by the presence of rebel groups which often recruit children for their illegal operations. This reality is part of the context of child labour in this region and, therefore, must be considered in efforts to alleviate the practice.

Cognisant of this, the EU works with its partners:

> [...] to protect and reintegrate children who were associated with armed forces and groups [...] to strengthen juvenile justice systems, in line with international standards to protect children and minors (EEAS 2018b).

Keeping this in mind, it is imperative that local circumstances are assessed prior to deploying any types of interventions. To appropriately address human insecurities in distinct environments, abstract concepts must be translated into contextualised solutions.

***Prevention-oriented***

In addressing the root causes of insecurities, HS focuses on preventing and mitigating the effects of current threats, all the while inspiring sustainable action and resilience rather than intervention. As such, this approach prioritises preventive measures as opposed to reactive ones (Tadjbakhsh 2013; UN 2009; UNTFHS 2016). In essence, the concept of HS "[...] refers to the sustainability and stability of development gains." (Tadjbakhsh 2013, 50).

Ensuring "resilience" within communities is critical to achieve a sustainable development that lasts for generations:

> [...] human development achieved does not mean human development sustained. Progress in human development may be slowed or even reversed because of shocks and vulnerabilities, with implications for people who have only achieved the basics in human development and for people who have yet to achieve the basics. Thus human development will have to be resilient (UNDP 2016, 11).

> Not just a quick fix, but a change of paradigm, a leap into the future (Von der Leyen 2022, 5).

The potential for the creation of resilient and inclusive societies is intimately linked to the potential of its peoples to live free from fear, want and indignity.

A prevention-oriented response is, thus, crucial to ensuring that individuals, including children as the most vulnerable elements of society, are protected from threats that may disrupt their daily lives. This is indispensable for the establishment of communities capable of enduring future shocks.

> Investment in integrated preventive services should be viewed as a kind of "vaccine" against the pandemic of violence against children. Integrated services for children and families are [...] also vital for the creation of just and resilient societies that can withstand shocks in the future (UN, General Assembly 2021, 19).

> Preventing and combating social exclusion of children is essential for social progress and sustainable development (EC 2021k, 3).

> [...] new approaches are needed to better prevent and respond to crises, such as famines, climate change and disasters, in order to protect children (UN 2021b).

> [...] underlines the link between inclusive and participatory societies, and sustainable development and the prevention of violent conflict (EU 2017c, 25).

Children are "the present and the future of our world." (EEAS 2017a). They are vital members of our society and key to achieving a more sustainable and just world.

As a multidimensional threat, child labour robs children of their childhood and compromises their future (UN 2021g). Therefore, providing a "future-proof security environment" (EC 2020e, 2) for children is fundamental when dealing with child labour.

> The future of our children needs both that we invest in sustainability and that we invest sustainably (Von der Leyen 2022, 7).

> [...] we are working every day, on all fronts and around the world, to provide long-term, sustainable and positive change for children (EEAS 2017a).

Preventive efforts to advance progress on the elimination of child labour must be supported by a focus on addressing its root causes (EEAS 2018b; EEAS 2019; ILO and UNICEF 2020):

> Identify and address the root causes of forced labour and child labour and ensure the sustainability of interventions to effect change (ILO n.d.c., 12).

> With a renewed focus on tackling root causes and protecting children's rights, we can get back on track toward the elimination of child labour (ILO 2021g).

> The sooner affected populations are provided with access to livelihoods the more effectively child labour can be prevented and addressed (ILO 2018e).

In the DRC, the enrolment of underage children in armed groups is a frontline issue, which often leads to forced child labour in mines. As a result, preventive measures play an integral part both in

avoiding the issue and curating an effective response to it, particularly when addressing the reintegration of former child-soldiers into society.

> [...] preventive measures-including awareness raising, basic education for all-are also critical to address this issue. [...] It is crucial to promote the social acceptance of child-soldiers once they come back and prevent them from being stigmatized, so as to avoid them returning to war because of lack any other option (EEAS 2017b).

### ***Protection and Empowerment***

Protection and empowerment are known as the two foundational pillars of HS. A policy framework rested upon these cornerstones, merges "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches (UNTFHS 2016).

Protection, which calls for a "top-down" approach, involves the development of social protection systems, effective governance and accountability, for instance. Empowerment, on the other hand, calls for a "bottom-up" approach. By promoting the empowerment of all people, HS seeks to increase participation among individuals and their communities, enabling them to act on their own behalf and increase overall resilience, but also guarantee that they are connected to their full potential. Both components are mutually reinforcing and necessary to promote a HS approach (Tadjabakhsh, and Chenoy 2007; UNDP 1994; UNTFHS 2016).

According to the UN Development Report of 2016, human development is defined as:

> [...] [the] development of the people through building human capabilities, by the people through active participation in the processes that shape their lives and for the people by improving their lives (UNDP 2016, 2).

This description clearly captures the essence of freedom from want, fear and indignity portrayed by HS and reflected in the principles of protection and empowerment. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, everyone must be able to fully enjoy all of their rights - civil, political, economic, social and cultural – allowing them to reach their full potential as equal citizens (EEAS 2020).

In order to sustain these rights for every individual, inequalities must be reduced. Only then can resilience be built, and more inclusive, sustainable societies created.

> Tackling economic insecurity and deep-rooted inequalities, including gender inequalities, as well as those further enhanced by poverty, climate and conflict, is indispensable to enable people and societies to adapt to change and strengthen their resilience to future shocks (UN 2021a, 10).

> We must ensure a broad sharing of opportunity and human security across society as we work towards a greener, more sustainable future (UN 2021c, 27-28).

The urgency in sustaining resilience was exacerbated by the global pandemic. As opposed to those with strong social protection schemes, countries with weaker systems encountered greater difficulty in creating suitable responses to protect the most vulnerable members of society, including women and children (UN 2021a).

Both UN and EU discourses on empowerment share the understanding that a resilient recovery from the pandemic must place its emphasis on protecting and empowering those left behind.

> Building back stronger will also mean ensuring quality education, protection and good mental health for all children (UN 2021b).

> COVID-19 stimulus packages must prioritize child protection, with social protection floors providing a cushion against financial and health shocks (UN 2021d).

> Children and teenagers are our agents of change and we must not spare any effort to empower them, to actively listen and create a much needed deliberative space for them (EEAS 2021e).

> Respecting children's rights is [...] vital for economic and social development, as it allows them to access productive and decent work in the future as adults. This can lift whole societies out of poverty (ILO 2021g).

Similarly, both actors promote the notion that the protection and empowerment of children is crucial to the fight against child labour (EEAS 2017c; EEAS 2019; EEAS 2021e; ILO 2021g; UN 2017b; UN 2021b; UN 2021e; UN 2021f).

> Realizing children's rights to quality education, to healthcare, to social protection, to an adequate standard of living and having their voices heard in the decisions that affect them, are fundamental to their right to be free from child labour (ILO 2021g).

> Social protection is key to providing an environment to keep children away from this reality [child labour] (EEAS 2022).

> To reach their full potential, boys and girls need protection from all forms of violence, abuse and neglect. Building a stronger child protection systems is the best entry point [to child labour] [...] (EEAS 2018b).

These principles are also clearly reflected within the EU's discourse on child labour in the DRC:

> [...] we are working [...] to provide long-term, sustainable and positive change for children, to ensure their protection, to end violence against children in emergencies and to provide them with their right to education and offer perspectives for the future (EEAS 2017a).
>
> We support our partners creating social protection floors and quality education legislations to help abolish child labour [...] (EEAS 2019).

In this sense, both UN and EU narratives are comparable when contemplating the element of empowerment. However, their discourses present substantial divergences when addressing the concept of "security".

Within the UN discourse, the term "security" is exclusively applied to notions, such as "human security", "income security", "health security", "economic security", "food security" and "global biosecurity", for instance (UN 2021c; UNDP 2022).

To the contrary, the EU often refers to "security" in combination with terms, such as "maritime" and "global". Therefore, the EU's security discourse is intimately linked to the dimension of "defence" (EU 2016; EU 2019; Juncker 2016).

"Security" and "defence" have become increasingly relevant themes across the EU's narrative, thus expanding its discourse on protection and empowerment. According to Federica Mogherini:

> [...] Europe is increasingly perceived as a global point of reference. This is also because we have explored the untapped potential of our union – first of all, on security and defence [...] our partners know that Europe's strength is not just our soft power (EU 2019, 4).

Former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, in his State of the Union address of 2016, clearly underscored the need for the EU to embrace its "hard power" in order to develop itself as a stronger global actor:

> Still, even though Europe is proud to be a soft power of global importance, we must not be naive. Soft power is not enough in our increasingly dangerous neighbourhood. [...] Europe needs to toughen up. Nowhere is this truer than in our defence policy (Juncker 2016, 18-19).

Nevertheless, despite an emerging need to explore its full security potential, the EU reaffirms the importance of both its soft and hard power:

> For Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand (EU 2016, 4).

> All those who for years feared that stronger European defence would be to the detriment of the Alliance have been proven that the opposite is true: they can and need to go hand-in-hand (EU 2019, 12).

In a similar vein, the themes of protection and empowerment go hand in hand with defence. The State of the Union's title itself reiterates this: "Towards a better Europe: A Europe that Protects, Empowers and Defends." (Juncker 2016).

### ***Common Responsibility***

Threats to security have become increasingly entwined, thus merging the notions of internal and external security. Subsequently, the outlines of national borders are gradually disintegrating, as the security of one nation is no longer independent from its global environment (EU 2016).

As such, cultivating an integrated network of multiple actors and applying their resources and capabilities becomes essential in ensuring HS (UNDP 2016; UNTFHS 2016).

The rapid spread of the Covid-19 virus was followed by waves of poverty and disparity, which highlighted the need to unite forces against a common threat. However, one of the major faults in efforts to counter these challenges was "[...] an inability to see our security in the security of others." (UNDP 2022, 141).

Similarly, the unequal distribution of vaccines worldwide served as a staunch reminder that a "global" recovery requires "global" efforts (UNDP 2022).

> We will not be able to face the systemic, global, interconnected threats individually or by focusing only on narrow national interests. For each of us to live free from want, from fear and from indignity will require that everyone live free from want, fear and indignity (UNDP 2022, 141).

Therefore, the security of one relies upon the security of all. This understanding is sustained across both UN and EU narratives:

> No one is safe until everyone is safe (UN 2021c, 14).

> An injury to one is an injury to all [...] In Europe, we have long since learned that when the rights of one person come under attack, the rights of others are vulnerable and when one community is demonised or discriminated against, it diminishes us all (EEAS 2020).

> We have learnt the lesson: my neighbour's and my partner's weaknesses are my own weaknesses (EU 2016, 4-7).

Due to this stark dependency, humanity must strive to achieve its common goals by working together as a "global family" (UN 2021c). The importance of a unified response to the world's current challenges is clearly portrayed within the EU discourse:

> The peace and prosperity of the European Union and its citizens depend on the peace and prosperity of the rest of the world and on a healthy planet (EC 2021l).

> Cooperation with third countries and at global level to address common challenges is central [...] with stability and security in the EU's neighbourhood critical to the EU's own security (EC 2020e, 2).

> We need a shared vision, and common action. None of our countries has the strength nor the resources to address these threats and seize the opportunities of our time alone. [...] All these goals can only be achieved by a truly united and committed Europe [...] (EU 2016, 3-4).

That being said, it is crucial that no one be forgotten. The leitmotif "leave no one behind" was introduced by Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and has been adopted by agencies worldwide in their global efforts to achieve the UN sustainable development goals (EEAS 2017a; EEAS 2018b; EU 2017b; UN 2021c; UNDP 2016).

This motto describes the interdependency between individuals and the importance of collective efforts to achieve a sustainable future for everyone. As such, it is intimately linked to the concept of "solidarity", described by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, as:

> [...] the principle of working together, recognizing that we are bound to each other and that no community or country can solve its challenges alone. It is about our shared responsibilities to and for each other, taking account of our common humanity and each person's dignity, our diversity and our varying levels of capacity and need. [...] Solidarity is not charity; in an interconnected world, it is common sense (UN 2021c, 14).

The post-Covid environment is seeing increased levels of fear, anxiety and distrust among its peoples. In order to address all of these issues, solidarity must go hand in hand with protection and empowerment (UNDP 2022). Only then can HS be advanced.

The concern for solidarity also features within the EU discourse. In his address to the state of the union in 2016, Juncker states:

> Solidarity is the glue that keeps our Union together. (...) Only together are we and will we remain a force to be reckoned with (Juncker 2016, 16).

This same message was reiterated 6 years later by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, in her own address to the state of the union:

> A union of determination and solidarity (...) a union that stands strong together. A union that prevails together (Von der Leyen 2022, 12-13).

When it comes to child labour in the DRC, the relevance of a shared response is clear:

> It is our collective task to do everything we can to ensure that [children's] rights are respected and ensured for every child, everywhere (EEAS 2018b).

> We all have the responsibility to listen to children and to act now (EC 2021m, 23).

> Every girl and every boy deserves a childhood and it is our responsibility, institutions and societies at large, to make sure that they are never deprived of this right – no matter their ethnicity, gender, religion, or, sometimes, the challenging living environments – no child should be left behind. Every voice should be heard (EEAS 2017a).

Although the universal ratification of Convention No. 182 on child labour symbolised a global commitment to eradicate the practice, the UN and the EU remain adamant about strengthening that commitment:

> We call on all other international, governmental and non-governmental actors to join forces for this important cause, for our present and our future (EEAS 2021e).

> As part of the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, the global partnership Alliance 8.7 [...] is encouraging Member States, regional and international organizations and others to redouble their efforts in the global fight against child labour [...] (UN 2021f).

> As we look to the Fifth Global Conference next year in South Africa, let us press forward with greater coordination, commitments, and action to protect every child (UN 2021d).

The expression "global fight against child labour" which features across documents of both organisations serves as a reminder that no country is exempt from the scourge of child labour.

In a highly interconnected world, challenges and their repercussions are global. Therefore, responsibility in addressing these challenges must be shared and efficient responses reached collectively (EU 2016; EC 2020e; ILO 2016; ILO 2018b).

The following table allows for a clear overview of the detailed analysis presented above.

**Table 7:** UN and EU Narratives on Child Labour in Comparison

| | UN | EU |
|---|---|---|
| **People-centred** | • Rooted in the primacy and indivisibility of human rights for all, especially society's most vulnerable, i.e., children<br>• Invokes the term "human security" as freedom from fear, want and indignity | • Rooted in the primacy and indivisibility of human rights for all, especially society's most vulnerable, i.e., children<br>• Does not invoke the term "human security", however promotes a human-centred discourse which is in alignment with the main tenets of HS in its broadest sense |
| **Multidimensional Threats** | • Threats facing the 21st century, including its causes and consequences are interdependent, transnational, and intergenerational | • Threats facing the 21st century, including its causes and consequences are interdependent, transnational, and intergenerational |
| **Comprehensive Approach** | • The world's interconnected threats cannot be addressed in silos. Effective action must, therefore, be comprehensive. As such, efforts must be integrated and coherent; address the entirety of risks to HS within and beyond borders; combine the security, development, and human rights agendas, while promoting a multistakeholder approach | • The world's interconnected threats cannot be addressed in silos. Effective action must, therefore, be comprehensive. As such, efforts must be integrated and coherent; address the entirety of risks to HS within and beyond borders; combine the security, development, and human rights agendas, while promoting a multistakeholder approach |
| **Context-specific** | • Different types of vulnerabilities are particular to different contexts. Therefore, solutions must be flexible and tailored to local circumstances and needs, capacities and legislation | • Different types of vulnerabilities are particular to different contexts. Therefore, solutions must be flexible and tailored to local circumstances and needs, capacities and legislation |
| **Prevention-oriented** | • Preventive measures are essential do advance resilience and ensure the creation of more just and inclusive societies | • Preventive measures are essential do advance resilience and ensure the creation of more just and inclusive societies |
| **Protection and Empowerment** | • The principles of protection and empowerment capture the essence of freedom from fear, want and indignity as depicted by HS. As such, sustainable societies must strive to protect the fundamental rights of all its people, empowering them to live life to its full potential<br>• The UN's discourse on protection and empowerment embraces the term "security", as in "human security", "food security" and "income security", for instance | • The principles of protection and empowerment capture the essence of freedom from fear, want and indignity as depicted by HS. As such, sustainable societies must strive to protect the fundamental rights of all its people, empowering them to live life to its full potential<br>• The EU's discourse on protection and empowerment embraces the term "security", as in "military security" and "maritime security". Thus, it expands its narrative to include the dimension of "defence". However, for the EU soft and hard power go hand in hand |
| **Common Responsibility** | • Modern threats have merged the national and international dimensions of security. The security of one depends on the security of others. Therefore, responsibility must be shared when addressing global challenges and effective solutions reached collectively | • Modern threats have merged the national and international dimensions of security. The security of one depends on the security of others. Therefore, responsibility must be shared when addressing global challenges and effective solutions reached collectively |

## 5.3 Discussion of Results

The comparative thematic analysis conducted throughout this chapter, suggests that, albeit some minor deviations, both the UN and the EU promote the same fundamental principles encompassed by the concept of HS. The results clearly contain the notion that although the EU discourse, as opposed to that of the UN, is not framed in the "language" of HS, the narrative it has adopted irrefutably aligns with the theory's main tenets.

Looking back at the research question addressed in this chapter, - How is the concern for HS framed within the narratives of the UN and the EU between 2016 and 2022? – the analysis indicates that the concern for HS has undeniably informed the discourses of both the UN and the EU, from 2016 to 2022, across all different categories and agendas contemplated by the study, as people-centred, encompassing a range of multidimensional threats, which require a comprehensive, context-specific and preventive response, with particular emphasis on the protection and empowerment of individuals that can only be achieved through a shared response.

The fact that the HS paradigm is reflected across several different issues, including that of child labour in the DRC, serves to reiterate the correlation between the latter and HS, an intrinsic link this dissertation has attempted to shed light upon. As established in Chapter II, child labour in all of its forms constitutes a threat to HS. Therefore, the two cannot coexist. Human security cannot be achieved where child labour persists.

That being said, it is crucial that efforts to prevent child labour go hand in hand with efforts to improve the overall HS situation of a given country. As such, they must consider the previously analysed themes.

> The human and economic returns on the investment in ending child labour are incalculable. Children who are free from the burden of child labour are able to fully realize their rights [...] in turn providing the essential foundation for broader social and economic development, poverty eradication, human rights and human wellbeing (ILO 2018e, 15).

While previous research on child labour has focused on assessing the impacts of the practice (Galli 2001; Metsing 2020) and analysing the efforts of different organisations to counteract the issue across different countries (Rozani 2022; Ullén, and Eck 2011), the results obtained in this chapter

contribute to a clear understanding of the narratives promoted by security actors, such as the UN and the EU.

Considering the essence of organisation's discourses is essential when analysing their efforts to combat a specific phenomenon, for not only does it allow for a deeper understanding of the organisations' true objectives, it is also crucial to determine the coherence between narratives and practices, thus ensuring their credibility.

Therefore, these results would allow scholars to refine future research on the efficiency of practices adopted by the UN and the EU, across a wide range of issues, by analysing the extent to which practical action is aligned with the themes identified above (people-centred, multidimensional threats, ...), thus determining whether said action reflects the narratives promoted by these actors.

In addition, the findings of this chapter would suggest that both actors have, indeed, harnessed their full potential as promoters of HS across their narratives, including that on child labour in the DRC, thus advancing a more comprehensive answer to the main research question, which this dissertation has attempted to address throughout the entirety of its chapters: How have the UN and the EU, as promoters of HS, acted in regard to child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, between 2016 and 2022?

## Final Considerations

EU and UN discourses are, first and foremost, people-centred, for they clearly emphasise the security of individuals, particularly those who are the most vulnerable. Despite never referencing the term "human security" itself, the EU clearly promotes a humancentric approach to the multidimensional challenges it faces.

In the pursuit of establishing itself as a stronger global actor, the EU promotes a comprehensive, contextualised and preventive approach to insecurities, which is identical to that of the UN. Likewise, both actors endorse the understanding that effective action against the world's interdependent threats must be unified and collective, relying on a wide range of multistakeholder.

The UN and the EU both promote a discourse rested upon the principles of protection and empowerment and, thus, support the conception that sustainable societies must strive to protect the fundamental rights of all its people, empowering them to live life to its full potential.

While the UN's discourse on protection and empowerment supports the notion of "security" as the protection of individuals against intangible threats, such as poverty, hunger and disease, the EU embraces a narrower definition.

Thus, the EU's narrative on protection and empowerment is extended to include the dimension of "defence", which is intimately tied to a "security" from tangible threats, such as violent conflict and war. Nonetheless, throughout its security discourse the EU puts forward the significance of combining both its "soft" and "hard" power.

Via qualitative thematic analysis, this chapter has sought to assess and compare the extent, to which the human-centred concern has permeated the narratives of the UN and the EU. Findings clearly suggest that the core principles of HS, as in freedom from fear, want and indignity, are present across both organisations and their different agendas, ranging from human development and human rights to security and child labour in the DRC.

As such, these results indicate that both the UN and the EU have, within their narratives, acted to their full potential as HS providers, thus advancing a more grounded response to the main research question: How have the UN and the EU, as promoters of HS, acted in regard to child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, between 2016 and 2022?

# CONCLUSION

According to recent estimates, the Covid-19 pandemic has led to the first increase in the numbers on child labour in the last 20 years, so that currently 160 million children worldwide are affected (ILO-UNICEF 2020). These shocking figures have prompted a global campaign against the issue, which has led international organisations across the world to develop a series of plans to prevent and, ultimately, eradicate the scourge, that is child labour.

As the world's largest cobalt exporter, the DRC is known to house the worst forms of the practice, particularly in its artisanal mining sector. Despite mounting evidence of serious human rights abuses occurring in these mines, child mining continues to evolve. In addition, economic hardship and school closure, due to national confinements, have forced even more children of vulnerable backgrounds into mining.

The fact that this sector constitutes one of the main sources of revenue for thousands of Congolese families, significantly hinders the performance of actors, such as the UN and the EU in their quest to reduce child labour in the country. Internationally recognised as promoters of HS, these organisations have played an active role in the DRC, supporting the government in its efforts to increase the security of children. However, despite substantial advancements and a strong commitment to the fight against child labour, global efforts remain disproportionate in regard to the immensity of the issue.

The shortage of academic literature on child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines from the perspective of HS, has inspired the research carried out throughout this dissertation. As such, this research has sought to analyse the contributions proposed by the UN and the EU, as providers of HS, in child protection, particularly child mining in the DRC; shed light onto the inherent link between child labour and the concept of HS; as well as compare the narratives of both actors on HS across a wide range of subjects, including child labour in the DRC.

## Research Findings

Based on the research conducted, inferences have been made that are pertinent to addressing the research's overarching question: How have the UN and the EU, as promoters of HS, acted in regard to child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, between 2016 and 2022?

In order to fully answer this question, the following secondary questions must be taken into consideration:

How does child labour in the DRC pose a threat to HS?

Based on the definition proposed by the UN Human Development Report (UNDP 1994), HS constitutes a multifaceted concept, encompassing anything which could be defined as a threat to the individual human being and their fundamental right to live life to its full potential. The report outlines seven types of security, which are necessary to uphold HS. These include personal security, food and health security, environmental security, economic, political and community security (UNDP 1994).

Child labour in the DRC deprives children of a quality education and future employment opportunities, thus feeding into a cycle of intergenerational poverty. In that sense, it jeopardises not only the financial stability of children and their families, but the economic welfare of the State affected by it as well. In this country, the practice majorly takes place in mining, which is recognised as one of the worst forms of child labour, as it involves exposure to toxic chemicals dispersed by mining operations and direct contact to certain minerals, such as cobalt.

The ensuing contamination of neighbouring land and waterways has far-reaching effects on the environmental and health security of child miners, local mining communities and the ecosystem as a whole. In addition, children labouring in mines may be forced to work for long hours in the scorching sun or in unstable, underground structures, facing the risk of collapse. Such human rights violations are in breach of children's political and personal security.

The political context of the DRC equally affects HS in the country. Despite a robust legal framework on child protection, aspects such as corruption and a lack of resources, obstruct the enforcement of laws aimed at preventing child labour in the country. This also compromises children's political and personal security.

With that said, child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines directly violates 5 (economic, environmental, health, political and personal security) of the 7 forms of security covered by the UNDP. However, insecurities are deeply interconnected. The phenomenon itself may not cause food insecurity, but as a direct result of poverty, child labour in the country is often driven by hunger, and by perpetuating chronic poverty it can, ultimately, exacerbate food insecurity for children themselves and future generations alike.

The same goes for community security, for child labour may not directly threaten the community, but by perpetuating environmental, political and economic instability, eventually consequences take their toll on the community as a whole. As such, child labour in the DRC poses a direct threat to HS in all of its forms.

Which measures have been adopted by the UN and the EU to combat child labour in the DRC between 2016 and 2022?

The UN and the EU have played an active role in their efforts to prevent and respond to child labour in the DRC's mines. Within the timeframe from 2016 to 2022, both have employed a wide array of measures to address the root causes of the phenomenon, through poverty reduction strategies, gender-equality programmes, the prevention of human trafficking and sexual violence, for instance. However, a number of more targeted actions have also been deployed, focusing on getting children out of mines and into schools. This can be achieved, inter alia, through the provision of school meals, or vocational training.

Despite some differences in their action - such as the fact that while the UN lacks the necessary mechanisms to enforce its strategies, the EU has made use of its instruments to establish import bans, for example - it is important to note that both actors share the same ambition: achieving Target 8.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals to eradicate child labour in all of its forms and, thus, ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms of all children to enjoy life to its full potential. This ambition clearly portrays the organisations' commitment to the promotion of HS, as freedom from fear, want and indignity.

How is the concern for HS framed within the narratives of the UN and the EU between 2016 and 2022?

A comparative thematic analysis of UN and EU narratives revealed that both actors promote a discourse, which is, first and foremost, centred on the security of each individual, especially those who are most vulnerable. In addition, both support an understanding that insecurities in the 21st century require a comprehensive, contextualised, and preventative approach, and that in order to achieve meaningful change, such threats must be addressed collectively by a spectrum of different stakeholders.

Furthermore, the UN and the EU endorse the notion that resilient societies must work to preserve the basic rights of all of its citizens, while enabling them to live their lives to their fullest potential. This rhetoric clearly reflects the principles of protection and empowerment defended by HS.

While the UN's discourse on protection and empowerment suggests that the concept of "security" should be expanded to include the protection of people against intangible threats, such as poverty, hunger, and sickness, the EU adopts a more constrained definition. In that sense, the EU's narrative on these principles encompasses the aspect of "defence", which is closely linked to a notion of security as protection from tangible threats, like war and violent conflict, for instance. Nonetheless, the EU makes a point of reinforcing the importance of combining both its "soft" and "hard" power throughout its security

discourse. One could claim, therefore, that from 2016 to 2022, both the UN and the EU's discourses were undoubtedly influenced by their concern for the humancentric approach to security.

Looking back at the main research question posed in this dissertation, it can be said that, within the timeframe analysed, both the UN and the EU have – through the development of child labour prevention programmes, as well as initiatives to reintegrate former child labourers - acted to their full potential as HS providers to counter the practice in the DRC's cobalt mines.

According to results obtained via thematic analysis, child labour has been placed at the core of UN and EU narratives as a direct threat to HS and, thus, as impediment to achieving their ultimate goal of ensuring the fundamental rights and freedoms of all people, including children. An ambition equally reflected in the measures they have adopted to reduce the practice in the country.

However, the harsh reality that child labour continues to affect the lives of millions across the globe should not be brushed aside. Although there is no panacea for child labour, this research suggests that, in the case of the DRC, the practice must be recognised as direct threat to HS. As such, effective measures against child labour must first prioritise the overall improvement of HS in this country.

**Contributions and Implications of the Study**

A review of the literature revealed an insufficient amount of research on the practice of child labour in the DRC's cobalt mines, from the perspective of HS. Likewise, there are few studies, which analyse the initiatives implemented by international actors, such as the UN and the EU, to counter the issue in this particular context. As such, this dissertation has served to fill this knowledge gap, by comparing the UN and the EU in their efforts to protect children working in the DRC's mines, while providing insight onto the organisations' narratives on HS.

However scarce, while previous research has focused on evaluating the measures adopted by international organisations to prevent child labour across different countries (Rozani 2022; Ullén, and Eck 2011), the present dissertation has attempted to provide insight onto the narratives of the UN and the EU. In comparing the discourses of these security actors via thematic analysis, this study has strived to determine whether the main themes present in their discourses are consistent across a variety of subjects and coherent among both actors, thus providing an innovative contribution to the academic field.

By analysing child labour through the lens of HS, this dissertation has provided a clearer and more profound understanding on the relationship between child labour and the concept HS and, ultimately, on the role of the UN and the EU, as promoters of HS, in child protection.

The comparative analysis of their discourses served to reiterate this intrinsic link, therefore, indicating that effective measures to counter child labour must be rooted in their commitment to ensure HS for everybody. In that respect, child labour ought to be acknowledged as more than a consequence of bad governance and poverty, but, most importantly, as a direct result of human insecurity and a contributing factor to its persistence in the DRC.

This recognition may spur future research on the effectiveness of the UN's and EU's practical responses to security concerns, which may, in turn, potentially inform the decisions of policymakers on a wide range of phenomena.

In addition, the findings suggest that the narratives of the UN and the EU are both in alignment with the concept of HS in its broadest sense. Contemplating the essence of organisation's discourses when judging their efforts to address a specific phenomenon is imperative to enable a more grounded understanding of their true motives and determine the coherence between narratives and practices.

While it is beyond the scope of this research (in part due to reduced access to data and limited time) to analyse the practices adopted by these organisations in the same way as their discourses, potential future research might include comparative analyses of the practices adopted by the UN and the EU, across a wide range of issues, to examine the extent to which the humancentric concern, as portrayed within their discourses, is reflective of their overall performance, and thus evaluate their credibility as international HS promoters.

Additional research venues might contemplate the interaction between the UN and the EU with different NGOs, for instance, determining similarities and differences among their action and narratives. In what concerns the case study, further research may focus on the effectiveness of measures designed by these organisations in collaboration with local partners, including the private sector on the ground. This would allow for the creation of new knowledge, which may bring us one step closer to developing measures against child labour which are apt to sustainably eradicate the phenomenon.

# APPENDIX

**Appendix 1** – Interview Guide

1. In agreement with the latest global estimates, the occurrence of child labour has increased for the first time in 20 years, currently affecting 160 million children worldwide. What do you believe were the reasons for this development?

2. In response to this global increase, the DRC has signed the ultimate goal to become a pioneer country of the Alliance 8.7, which aims to achieve Target 8.7 of the UN SDGs. Can you tell me about any measures that are being implemented to support the country in this endeavour?

3. Were there any challenges in the implementation of these initiatives?

4. Are you familiar with the concept of human security? And if so, can you tell me what your understanding of the term is?

5. How do you view the link between human security and child labour?

6. According to the latest human development index, the DRC is one of the poorest countries worldwide, and plagued by recurring economic crises, natural disasters and armed conflict. Can you give examples of measures, which aim to improve the human security situation in the DRC, which may indirectly have a positive effect on child labour reduction?

7. Seen as thousands of Congolese families rely on child labour to survive, the eradication of the practice is a highly complex matter. What would you consider to be sustainable ways to end child labour in the DRC?

# ANNEXES

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**Annex 1 -** Aerial photograph of Ruashi mine reveals its proximity to thousands of homes in the province of Lubumbashi (Scheele, de Haan, and Kiezebrink 2016).

Source: Google maps photographs, 2 March 2016.

**Annex 2 -** Cobalt mining site near the south-eastern province of Kasulo (Kara 2018).

Photograph by Siddharth Kara (2018).

**Annex 3 -** Women and children washing and sorting ore near a cobalt mine (Kara 2018).

Photograph by Siddharth Kara (2018).

**Annex 4 -** Children rinsing stones at an artisanal mining site (UNICEF 2021a).

Photograph by UNICEF DRC Brown.

**Annex 5 -** Miner climbing out of an improvised pit shaft (2015).

Source: Amnesty International 2016

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