



## **MEDIATION AND THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT - INTENSIVE ADVANCED COURSE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In contemporary conflict scenarios, children are among the most affected and yet often the least considered in mediation and peacebuilding efforts. The inclusion of child protection strategies in peace negotiations and conflict resolution mechanisms is not only a legal obligation but also a fundamental step towards sustainable peace and the safeguarding of future generations. Recognizing this crucial need, the *Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict*, in collaboration with the *Milan Chamber of Arbitration*, is pleased to present an intensive advanced course dedicated to exploring the nexus between mediation and child protection.

This course aims to provide participants with legal frameworks, operational tools, and negotiation practices to ensure that children's rights and needs are at the heart of peace processes.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The course employs an interactive, interdisciplinary approach combining theory and practice:

- **Lectures and Presentations** – Led by experts in mediation, child protection, and international law, providing in-depth frameworks and practical knowledge.
- **Case Studies** – Examination of real-life peace processes where child protection provisions were integrated or neglected.
- **Workshops and Group Exercises** – Interactive sessions for skill-building in stakeholder engagement, drafting agreements, and ethical negotiation.
- **Role-playing and Simulations** – Practice-based learning to simulate ceasefire negotiations and child-sensitive dialogue.

- **Panels and Guest Lectures** – Exchange with field professionals and policymakers to link academic learning with operational realities.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

This course is designed for professionals, practitioners, and advanced students who are engaged or interested in the fields of mediation, child protection, and conflict resolution. Ideal participants include:

- **Mediators and Peacebuilders:** Professionals involved in conflict resolution, dialogue facilitation, and peace negotiation processes.
- **Child Protection Officers and Humanitarian Workers:** Staff from international organizations, NGOs, and agencies working directly with children in crisis and armed conflict contexts.
- **Legal and Policy Experts:** Practitioners focusing on international humanitarian law, human rights, and the development or implementation of mediation frameworks.
- **Researchers and Academics:** Advanced students or early-career scholars in the fields of international relations, peace studies, human rights, or security studies.
- **Government and Institutional Representatives:** Individuals engaged in policy planning, humanitarian diplomacy, or multilateral negotiations with a child protection mandate.

## OBJECTIVES

1. **To Understand** the international legal and normative frameworks related to children in armed conflict.
2. **To Equip** participants with strategies and tools for integrating child protection into peace processes.
3. **To Analyse** successful and failed case studies in the inclusion of CAAC provisions in mediation.
4. **To Practice** effective and ethical engagement with armed groups and children.
5. **To Promote** sustainable and inclusive peace processes through a child-sensitive lens.

## AIMS

- **Raise Awareness** on the necessity of including child protection in peace processes.
- **Strengthen Competencies** in negotiation, mediation, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Bridge Policy and Practice** by promoting tested approaches in diverse conflict settings.
- **Facilitate Networking** among professionals working at the intersection of child protection, mediation, and peacebuilding.
- **Encourage Innovation** in designing and implementing child-focused conflict resolution mechanisms.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE**

The course *Mediation and the Protection of Children in Armed Conflict* will be held in **English** from **27 to 30 October 2025**, in a **hybrid format** allowing both in-person attendance at the San Pio V Institute (Rome, Italy), and online participation via Zoom platform. Daily sessions will be held in the morning from **09:00 to 13:00**, with additional **afternoon sessions from 14:30 to 17:00**.

The course is coordinated by Professor **Laura Guercio** and Professor **Ljubomir Petruljeskov**. Sessions will consist of lectures delivered by leading international experts and practitioners, followed by Q&A segments and moderated discussions designed to stimulate active engagement among participants. Sessions will be delivered by **distinguished experts and practitioners in the fields of mediation, international law, and child protection**, offering participants both conceptual frameworks and case-based reflections.

The course will admit a maximum of **9 participants on site** and up to **20 participants online**. The standard participation fee is **€250 for on-site attendance** and **€200 for online attendance**. Please note that UNETCHAC does not assume responsibility for expenses related to travel, accommodation, or meals, which remain entirely at the charge of participants.

An **early registration fee** applies to those who confirm their attendance and complete payment no later than **29 September 2025**. In this case, the fee is reduced to **€200 for on-site participants** and **€175 for online participants**. Students coming from disadvantaged areas, will be entitled of discounted rates. The **final deadline for applications** is fixed at **23 October 2025**.

All submitted applications will be **reviewed by the Scientific Committee** of the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application **via email** in due course.

To receive the **Certificate of Completion**, **on-site participants** are required to **attend 100%** of the course sessions. **Online participants must attend at least 80%** of the sessions (live or, when justified, via recordings) and actively engage in course activities. At the end of the course, participants may be asked to submit a **final project proposal or short essay**. The most outstanding contributions may be considered for inclusion in future publications or academic initiatives promoted by the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC).

Following the course, **internship opportunities** within the Network and **scholarship possibilities** for future studies may be offered to the most deserving participants.

For further information or clarification, please contact us at the official course email address: [\*\*unetchacadvancedcourse@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:unetchacadvancedcourse@gmail.com)

To apply, please **fulfill the application form** at the following link: [\*\*Application Form\*\*](#)

**Please Note:** Speakers to be announced upon full confirmation

## **Programme**

### **Day 1 – Conflict and Child Protection Foundations**

#### **Morning (9:00–13:00)**

- *Overview of Children in Armed Conflict: Definitions and Global Trends*
- *The UN's Six Grave Violations Against Children*
- *Legal Frameworks: CRC, OPAC, UNSCR 1612, 1882, 2427*

#### **Afternoon (14:30–17:00)**

- *Basics of Conflict, ADR, and Mediation*
    - Core concepts of conflict and dispute dynamics
    - Overview of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods
    - Mediation process and principles
    - Comparative perspectives: mediation vs. other ADR mechanisms
  - *Group Activity: Mapping CAAC Stakeholders*
    - Identify key actors in child protection and mediation processes
    - Analyse roles, interests, and power dynamics
    - Visual mapping exercise to build stakeholder networks
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### **Day 2 – Mediation Basics and Integration in Peace Processes**

#### **Morning (9:00–13:00)**

- *The Role of Mediators in Protecting Children*
  - Mediator responsibilities and challenges
  - Ensuring child-sensitive approaches
- *Strategies for Including CAAC in Peace Agreements*
  - Ceasefire clauses and demobilisation provisions
  - Monitoring and verification mechanisms
- *Challenges in Negotiating Child Protection with Armed Groups*

#### **Afternoon (14:30–17:00)**

- *Case Study Analysis – Colombia*
  - Key actors and negotiation dynamics
  - Lessons on integrating CAAC provisions
  - Reflection questions for participants
- *Simulation Exercise: Drafting a Ceasefire Clause with CAAC Elements*
- *Debrief and Reflection*
  - Key takeaways from simulation

## **Day 3 – Engagement, Ethics, and Child-Sensitive Mediation**

### **Morning (9:00–13:00)**

- *Negotiating with Armed Groups*
  - Approaches to recruitment and release of children
  - Practical challenges and leverage points
- *Reintegration vs. Re-victimisation*
  - Rights-based approaches to reintegration
  - Preventing cycles of abuse
- *Ethical Considerations*
  - Addressing trauma-sensitive communication
  - Ensuring participation without harm

### **Afternoon (14:30–17:00)**

- *Workshop: Building a Child-Sensitive Mediation Framework*
    - Principles, tools, and checklists for mediators
  - *Role Play: Dialogue Simulation*
    - Practice engagement with armed group representatives
  - *Panel Discussion with Experts*
    - Insights from child protection NGOs and field practitioners
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## **Day 4 – Tools, Policy, and Practices**

### **Morning (9:00–13:00)**

- *Conflict Analysis with a Child Protection Lens*
  - Tools and methodologies for mediators
- *Data Collection and Monitoring Grave Violations*
  - Sources, verification, and reporting practices
- *Round Table: Incorporating CAAC in Mediation Policies*
  - Policy frameworks and institutional best practices

### **Afternoon (14:30–17:00)**

- *Breakout Sessions: Multistakeholder Mediation Scenarios*
  - Simulated mediation exercises with diverse actors
- *Final Group Presentations of Mediation Proposals*
  - Peer review and feedback

## **Course Evaluation and Certificate Ceremony**

## **Certification**

Participants will receive a **Certificate of Completion**, potentially co-issued by the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict and a partnering institution or university. Academic recognition or CPD credits may be available.

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### **Scientific & Coordinating Committee**

Laura Guercio  
Ljubomir Petruljeskov

### **Administrative Committee**

Andrea Ciommei  
Antonino Pola  
Lisa Faccin  
Kirill Skantsev