

Union's delegate even accused them of "wanting to undermine the recognition of the rights of the child in practice and to enable governments to shift their responsibilities on to others."⁸⁵ The IUCW's delegate in New York observed: "the subject matter of the Declaration represent[ed] a battleground of ideology on which each group with a 'cause' to promote [saw] an opportunity to gain ground for its own purposes."⁸⁶

A similar debate resulted over providing children with proper health care. Western opposition forced the Human Rights Commission to remove language calling for "free medical services" from the draft circulating for comment between 1957 and 1959.⁸⁷ The declaration's fourth principle, which dealt with the problem of health care, represented a compromise: "The child shall enjoy the benefits of social security," including health for child and mother, nutrition, housing, and recreation. This broadly defined right reflected the UN Secretariat's determination, which had grown since it had first explored the question of children's rights in 1945-46, to expand the changing minima of welfare. "[C]hild welfare [had become for many] an integral part of any general social security system."⁸⁸ The idea reflected the Social Commission's own mandate; during consultations in 1957-59 on the possibility of adopting the 1924 Geneva Declaration, the inclusion of a right to social security figured prominently.

Other principles underlined the evolving nature of childhood. While the 1924 text promised a child the means to develop and the means to earn a livelihood, the authors of the 1959 statement on children's rights tried to provide a right to an "education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary stages."⁸⁹ Similarly, the declaration included a new principle on the worth of the family:

The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, whenever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his parents, and, in any case, in an atmosphere of affection and of moral and material security; a child of tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his mother.⁹⁰

This article apparently addressed Western criticism of communist child-rearing, echoed in the remarks of the National Chinese delegate to the Third Committee: "It was sad indeed to see families being broken up under the commune system on the mainland of China and children there