



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

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Interactive Dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

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As we reflect on this year's 25th anniversary of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the SRSG calls on states to fulfil their obligations under those instruments. In 2024, **more than one in six children** globally lived in conflict situations, forced to suffer abhorrent abuses and violations of their rights. Children were severely affected by multiplying and escalating conflicts that were marked by complete disregard for their rights. While not yet able to give the exact numbers from the upcoming Secretary-General's annual report on children in armed conflict, the SRSG affirms that in many countries the situation for children has worsened yet again.

Preliminary data shows that the highest numbers of violations were the **killing and maiming of children**, followed by the denial of humanitarian access. For sexual violence against children and attacks on schools and hospitals, an increase is expected. While cases of recruitment and use remained high last year, they are expected to have decreased. The SRSG is deeply concerned



about the surge over the last years in incidents of **denial of humanitarian access to children**. In this regard, the Office of the SRSG, together with UNICEF, the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and in consultations with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, will publish at the end of April a **guidance note on the denial of humanitarian access**.

Continued attacks on schools and hospitals, as well as their use for military purposes, are restricting children's **access to education and health**, and thus jeopardising their future opportunities. Girls' education is a frequent target, including through attacks on girls' schools and the abduction of girls at school or on the way to school. The protection of conflict-affected children and the fulfilment of their rights also continue to be undermined by barriers to the registration of children at birth. Unregistered children are more likely to suffer grave violations, as they are unable to demonstrate that they are below 18 years old and entitled to special protections.

Continued engagement with parties to conflict by the SRSG and United Nations partners on the ground has led to some positive developments for conflict-affected children, including the release of thousands of children from armed forces and armed groups. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, the UN signed in June 2024 an action plan with the opposition Syrian National Army and its aligned legions and factions to end and prevent the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children. In **Ukraine**, the Government extended by one year the joint prevention plan it signed in August 2023 with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children in Ukraine. Governments in the **Central African Republic** and in **Haiti** signed with the United Nations handover protocols for the transfer of children associated with armed actors to civilian authorities.

This engagement, in situations of great hardship for UN personnel and for aid workers, took place against the backdrop of drawdowns of peace operations and special political missions and diminishing child protection capacity. At a time where the gap between needs and funding is exponentially increasing, we must ensure that budget cuts are not at the expense of the most vulnerable. **Failure to invest in children**, and especially those in conflict situations, comes at the risk of further fuelling instability, undermining social cohesion and prolonging conflict, thus impacting regional and international stability.

As regards the **UNHRC and its mechanisms**, the SRSG's Office has provided background information on children and armed conflict for 17 thematic and country resolutions of the UNHRC, and the SRSG has engaged with nine country and thematic special procedures mandate holders. In collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, the SRSG published last year a study on child trafficking and armed conflict. Her Office submitted contributions to the UPRs of three countries on the children and armed conflict agenda.

In September 2024, the SRSG formalised her cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child through a Memorandum of Understanding. Her Office provided input to six country-specific concluding observations of the Committee and contributed to its draft General Comment No. 27 on children's rights to access to justice and effective remedies. She also



exchanged with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Cooperation with OHCHR increased, and her Office contributed to four of its reports, including the upcoming report of the High Commissioner on the Rights of the Child and Violations of the Human Rights of Children in Armed Conflict, requested in UNHRC Resolution 55/29.

Furthermore, the SRSG maintained close **engagement with regional organisations**. She addressed the League of Arab States' Committee on Combating Violence against Children. In collaboration with the Special Envoy of the African Union on Youth, she launched a social media campaign aimed at raising awareness among conflict-affected children and young people in Africa about potential risks pertaining to the six grave violations. Through her Europe Liaison Office, she provided expertise for the revision of the EU's guidelines on children in armed conflict. In November 2024, she was the first Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict to brief the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna.

Finally, her Office continued to provide guidance, build capacity, and raise awareness on the children in armed conflict agenda. Last January, she launched her Doha Hub in Qatar, together with UNESCO, a guidance for teachers and educators working with children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups. The so-called **Children in Armed Conflict Primer**, launched in February last year by the SRSG's Office, is being translated into French and Arabic and is accessible free of charge on the platform of the United Nations System Staff College. Two months ago, her Office concluded an advanced **training course on children in armed conflict**, which aimed at complementing the knowledge acquired through the primer.

On 11 March 2025, the SRSG's Office launched in Geneva a new advocacy campaign titled **Prove It Matters**. It aims for children to become advocates of their own rights and for member states to commit to concrete actions to comply with their obligations under the CRC. She calls on states to join in this effort and prove that child rights matter. To conclude, in line with this campaign, the SRSG urges the international community to redouble efforts to integrate children's rights into all aspects of our collective response to the multifaceted crisis facing us today. As a global community, we have a shared responsibility and interest to forge a world in which every child is nurtured by love, shielded from harm and allowed to grow in peace.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The SRSG's **guidance note** is a tool that will provide UN partners involved in the implementation of my mandate and its monitoring and reporting mechanism on the ground with concrete operational guidance on the many components and different expressions of the denial of humanitarian access within the children and armed conflict agenda, which in turn will therefore enhance their monitoring and reporting capacities. This will allow child protection staff to be better equipped to mitigate the impact of the denial of humanitarian access to children.

Turning to **birth registration**, ensuring it in conflict situations requires a multi-pronged approach. Mobile registration units and digital documentation systems can help reach remote or disputed areas, while partnerships with humanitarian organisations and local actors can facilitate safe registration. Legal frameworks should allow for alternative documentation, such as affidavits or community attestations, when official records are unavailable. Governments must integrate birth registration into humanitarian response plans, ensuring that displaced, unaccompanied, and



formerly recruited children are not left stateless. Collaboration with conflict parties, where possible, can support registration processes that do not expose children to further harm.

On the **DRC**, the situation of children in the eastern provinces has deteriorated dramatically. Children were reportedly killed and maimed in and around Goma during the recent takeover of the city by M23, and there are reports of mass abductions of children, as well as sexual violence. Verification by is ongoing. The MONUSCO international staff base in Goma was temporarily relocated to Entebbe in Uganda, and national staff to Kinshasa on mission drawdowns, as requested by Belgium.

It is absolutely essential that the responsibility for the **implementation of the CAC mandate** in affected countries does not reach solely with one agency. To that end, it is important to strengthen a one-UN approach in the implementation of the CAC mandate. Drawdowns of peace operations or special political missions must be accompanied by the reinforcement of child protection capacities in all UN entities. The Security Council in its resolution 2764 of 2024 echoed those needs and called for strengthened coordination.

On **accountability**, the SRSB's Office and its partners support accountability efforts for grave violations against children, including by supporting national justice mechanisms. In addition, measures implemented within the framework of action plans that are co-signed with us promote accountability for perpetrators of grave violations, such as the adoption of national legislation criminalising the six grave violations. Her Office's sustained exchanges with UN-mandated Commissions of Enquiry and Fact-Finding Missions. It also contributed to the Committee on the Rights of the Child draft General Comment n. 27. The SRSB encourages states to support all of those processes.

With regard to **cooperation between the UN and regional organisations and civil society**, the SRSB calls for the creation of child protection units in all regional and sub-regional organisations that are trained by the United Nations and who would benefit from the experience of both international and local civil society organisations in a more horizontal manner. Regional organisations are at the forefront of conflict prevention, early warning and of responding to conflict, which makes them essential partners in implementing the children and armed conflict mandate. We have to reinforce their capacity to play this role.

Digital platforms and AI-powered technologies have increased risks of recruitment and use of children into armed forces and groups. Armed actors exploit online platforms to recruit children, often through social media, online gaming and encrypted messaging apps. These platforms provide means for grooming and luring children into armed groups and their forced pretences or coercion. AI-driven misinformation and propaganda might further manipulate children, glorifying their participation in hostilities. The international community must also invest in digital literacy programmes and protective technologies that empower children, including girls, as well as their caregivers and teachers to navigate digital spaces safely.

Evoking the link between **education and peace**, the SRSB recalls that education is a powerful tool to protect children and their rights, as well as to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace. Before conflict, education can address the root causes. Education contributes to preventing conflict by equipping children with knowledge and skills to build their future, lift them and their families out of poverty and offer them opportunities to contribute to society in a meaningful way.



During conflict, access to education can protect children from exposure to grave violations in armed conflict, giving them a safe space upon which they can survive with some type of mental agility and security of purpose. After the conflict, education is very important for restoring the rights of children. Education can provide life and livelihood skills, social support and education for peace, tolerance and reconciliation to children affected by conflict. In recognition of this **triple role of education**, the SRSG's Office jointly with UNESCO published in January of this year a guide for teachers to support children and young people in armed conflict, including those who are formerly associated with armed forces or groups, to reintegrate them into their community. In addition, OHCHR, upon request from the UNHRC, is preparing a report on that matter to be presented at its 59th session and to which the SRSG's Office has provided extensive inputs.

On the issue of **children born of rape**, legal identity and nationality must be guaranteed to prevent the risk of statelessness, ensuring these children can access healthcare, education and other essential services. Governments should adopt flexible civil registration mechanisms that account for the complexities faced by survivors, including cases where fathers are unknown or unacknowledged. In 2022, the SRSG's Office collaborated with the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict to provide input to a report of the Secretary-General to the UN Security Council on women and girls who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence in conflict and children born of sexual violence in conflict on these questions.

On **Ukraine**, the international community can continue to urge the Russian Federation to develop jointly with the UN an action plan to address the violations for which the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups are listed for. Turning to **mine action**, we really need for victim assistance to be tailored to children. We need much more awareness raising targeted at children in cooperation with the communities on longer mine action programmes and the dangers of explosive rounds of war. As mentioned by **Panama**, we really need to support the mining and it is the highest priority to decontaminate the soils after a conflict to allow the communities to return and live in peace. Turning to **Afghanistan**, a main measure should be for the de facto authorities to respect the international standard of 18 for the age of the child as to prevent child recruitment and use as well as sexual violence.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Views Expressed by State Delegations

Estonia, taking the floor on behalf of the **Nordic-Baltic countries**, recalls in every armed conflict, children are the most vulnerable and exposed to its devastating effects. Every year we hold on to the hope for progress in alleviating the suffering of children caught in armed conflict. Yet, year after year, the situation grows increasingly grim. As highlighted in the report, violence against children in armed conflict has reached extreme level. The year 2024 being one of the darkest for children living amidst conflict. The dire situation that children face worldwide is compounded by the denial of humanitarian access, recognised as one of the six grave violations by the UN Security Council. This intensifies the suffering experienced by children and has long-term consequences in their growth and development. It is imperative that all parties involved in conflicts fulfil their obligations to allow and facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access for both international and local organisations to meet the need of affected children and



their communities. The Nordic-Baltic countries are looking forward to the SRSG's guidance note on enhanced monitoring and reporting on the denial of humanitarian access to children.

Lithuania also speaking on behalf of **Poland and Ukraine** values the SRSG's call upon states to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law (IHRL) and other relevant international legal frameworks and to immediately end and prevent further grave violations against children in armed conflicts. Russia blatantly disregards any law that requests ensuring the safety of children. Russia's war against Ukraine continues to bring suffering to thousands of children and their families. Children are being forcefully taken from their parents, deported, subjected to measures designed to erase their national identity, illegally adopted and militarised by Russia. Deliberate attacks carried out by Russia and Ukraine that affect objects protected by IHL, notably medical facilities, have been continuing for more than three years. Also, access to education is disrupted at all levels and attacks on schools continue.

Speaking on behalf of the **Arab group, Jordan** highly values the ongoing effort deployed by the UN mechanism in documenting and monitoring these violations. The Arab group equally supports the international commitment to protect children against the impact of armed conflicts. Children in armed conflicts in Arab region, particularly in the Arab-Palestinian occupied lands, faced during the reporting period grave, horrendous violations. The Arab group followed with great concern and noted that the report did not attach the needed and worth importance to these violations. These violations require further response and consider that those responsible would be put on the list of the parties which commit grave violations against children. The Arab group also calls on the parties to implement relevant international commitment, including Resolution 1612 and subsequent Security Council resolutions, which call for putting an end to all types of violations against children. The Arab group underscores the following. Firstly, prompt ending of violations against children. Secondly, rehabilitation and integration of children affected by conflicts.

Ghana, speaking on behalf of the **African group**, is deeply concerned about the devastating impact of armed conflicts on children, including forced recruitment, sexual violence, attack on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian assistance and access. These violations call for urgent and collective international action. The African group believes that addressing grave violations against children in conflict-affected areas requires a coordinated and targeted approach, which may include strengthening capacities at national level to prevent and respond to crimes against children, supporting the reintegration and rehabilitation of children released from armed groups, including psychosocial assistance, access to education and socioeconomic reintegration, ensuring accountability for crimes against children, and promoting dialogue with conflicting parties to prevent and end violation, including new recruitment. In closing, the African group reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the promotion and protection of children's rights, especially those affected by conflicts, and calls for renewed international efforts to ensure that all children, wherever they are, can have a chance to grow up in dignity and security.

Belgium, taking the floor on behalf of the **group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict** co-chaired by Uruguay and Belgium, thanks the SRSG for her report and reaffirm our unwavering support for her mandate. The group also welcome her new campaign, Prove It Matters. Regrettably, in 2025, over 473 million children are living in conflict zones, a figure that keeps



increasing. The number of great violations against children has also reached unprecedented levels, reflecting an increase in armed violence and conflicts, but also an erosion of the realisation of children's rights, which need to be protected, particularly in times of armed conflict. 2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. Both the CRC and particularly its Article 38 and the Optional Protocol play a critical role in safeguarding children's rights during armed conflict. The group reaffirms its strong commitment to these binding instruments. While the vast majority of states have ratified both instruments, effective implementation remains crucial, and a renewed global commitment is urgently needed. The group therefore calls on states to honour their commitments and fully implement the CRC and its Optional Protocol.

Kenya takes the floor on behalf of a group of 75 states committed to protecting education through our collective endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration and our resolute efforts to implement the guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict. At this session of the Human Rights Council, we must confront the stark reality that attacks on schools, students and education personnel, as well as the military use of education facilities, continue to escalate with immediate and long-term consequences for children, especially girls and those with disabilities. The persistent lack of accountability for acts that may constitute violations and not only perpetuate harm but undermine efforts to prevent future attacks and ensure greater protection for children and their rights to education. It puts children and youth at high risk of physical harm, mental harm, exposes them to grave violations and abuses of human rights and perpetuates the cycles of violence and conflict. Many children once forced out of school never return. The group welcomes the SRSG's reminder to all conflict parties that the military use of schools must be avoided. The Government of Kenya is honoured to host the 5th International Conference this year, which marks the 10th anniversary of the Safe Schools Declaration, now signed by 121 states. This milestone offers us a moment to reflect on both challenges and progress. Kenya encourages all states to support and participate in the 5th International Conference. Kenya calls on all states to accelerate efforts to achieve universal endorsement and implementation of this vital instrument, and stands ready to collaborate with the SRSG.

Kuwait stresses that in light of escalation of armed conflicts globally, children are facing threats to their future and life. This requires a quick response to protect them against the war and aggressions because they are the most vulnerable in these conflicts. Children in Palestine live in the most dangerous environments in the world. They face grave violations. They are killed, maimed due to direct targeting and shelling by the occupying power, together with arbitrary arrests and houses demolished, particularly in Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In this light, Kuwait underscores the need to shine a light on these violations in UN reports while doubling efforts to protect Palestinian children and holding violators of their rights to account in order to ensure a safe environment for them.

Luxembourg thanks the SRSG for her report which highlights the alarming trends of violations against children in armed conflicts and which have been intensifying in an appalling manner throughout the first half of last year. Over 18,000 serious violations of rights of children that were documented, including killings, forced recruitment and sexual violence. Luxembourg is seriously alarmed by the upsurge of obstacles to humanitarian aid, which is depriving thousands of



children from vital care as well as protection for their survival. The multiplication of attacks against schools and their personnel have taken on a concerning scale. Seriously compromising the right of children to education, humanitarian access is an absolute necessity in order to protect the rights of children impacted by conflict. Luxembourg commends the work by the SRSG in order to strengthen global partnerships, which are of paramount importance in order to overcome the scope and the recurrence of the serious violations committed during conflicts.

Germany supports your work, your mandate and we are proud to become a champion of your newly launched Proof It Matters campaign. Germany is grateful to the SRSG for highlighting states' obligations to remove existing legal and practical barriers with regard to the accessibility of birth registration without discrimination of any kind. While birth registration is a basic human right, children born out of conflict-related sexual violence are particularly prone to non-registration, often due to discriminatory laws and gender-biased enforcement and application of existing laws and regulations. This can have devastating consequences for the rest of their lives. Without legal identity, these children have no access to basic services, healthcare or education. Many of them remain stateless. We therefore need to ensure that every child can be registered directly after birth. Allowing mothers to apply for registration of their child on their own, without the presence or the explicit consent of the father, would be key to achieving this goal.

Italy highlights that in recent years, as armed conflicts have multiplied across the globe, millions of children have been forced to endure the harsh realities of war. The alarming number of minors killed, maimed and abducted in ongoing conflict is deeply disturbing. Italy is particularly concerned by the disproportionate effect of conflict on young women and girls. Italy also strongly condemns the recruitment of child soldiers, a reprehensible practise that deprives children of their innocence, safety and future. Italy strongly supports the mandate of the SRSG and joins her call to all parties in any armed conflict to put an end to all violations against children. Italy remains steadfast in its commitment to securing a better future for children. In that spirit, Italy has organised two days ago a side event together with the SRSG on the protection of children in armed conflict, on emerging technologies and on Women, Peace, Security principles in arms control. The event reaffirms that only through international cooperation and collective action we will be able to build a world where every child has the opportunity to grow up in safety and security.

Portugal acknowledges the gravity of the situation outlined in the report, where children continue to bear the brunt of armed conflict. The figures contained in the annual report are deeply shocking. The situation is even more preoccupying when considering the first grave violation, killing and maiming of children. The rights of children are being bluntly disregarded and the protections they are entitled to under IHL are being ignored. Even though conflicts are becoming more complex, with new challenges arising from the emergence of armed groups and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, we must not lose sight of the consensual nature of the children in armed conflict agenda. While appreciating the ongoing efforts of the UN to address these issues, Portugal recognises that much more is needed to break the cycle of impunity for those responsible for grave violations against children. Prevention, early warning mechanisms and meaningful reintegration programmes for affected children are essential to achieving long-term solutions. Protecting children from the horrors of war must be a priority for the international community as a whole.



Slovenia highly appreciates the SRSG's work, strongly support her mandate, and offers its full support to the 'Prove It Matters' campaign. Regrettably, in 2024, violence against children continued at alarming levels, with the majority of affected children being victims of at least one of the grave violations. There must be zero tolerance for violations of IHRL and IHL. In her report, the SRSG touches upon a critical issue of birth registration and the heightened vulnerability of unregistered children to grave violations, lack of documentation presents a major obstacle, especially for children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, as well as displaced, unaccompanied and children separated from their families. To conclude, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, Slovenia calls on all Member States that have not yet ratified it to do so.

Switzerland has long been committed to the agenda on children in armed conflicts, especially as an active member of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict when we served on the Security Council. Switzerland will continue its support in the future. The multiplication and aggravation of armed conflicts, as well as a humanitarian crisis that of a chronic nature, have exacerbated the serious violations committed against children in 2024. It is of paramount importance that the parties to the conflicts commit to protecting children, respecting their rights in accordance with their obligations under international law. Safe, rapid, unimpeded humanitarian access is not just an obligation under IHL. It is also an indispensable condition for efficient humanitarian action in order to protect children. Switzerland is seriously concerned by the increase in cases of denials of humanitarian access. It is important to understand the reasons for this in order for us to remedy it. In this framework, Switzerland commends the development of a guidance note by the Office of the SRSG in order to strengthen monitoring and follow-up of cases of denial of humanitarian access for conflict-afflicted children.

Japan thanks the SRSG for presenting her annual report and for her untiring work. Ongoing conflicts around the world are causing unprecedented suffering among children. Japan urges all parties to these conflicts to fully comply with their obligations under international law, including IHL to protect children from the inhumane consequences of armed conflict. In this regard, as mentioned in the SRSG's report, it is imperative to eliminate impediments to humanitarian assistance reaching children in order to ensure full, safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access. Priority must also be given to upholding children's right to education and supporting their development in the situation of armed conflict. We must spare no effort in ensuring access to safe and quality education for children, particularly for girls who are disproportionately affected and vulnerable to grave violations such as sexual violence. Let us once again redouble our efforts to protect children affected by armed conflict. Children deserve to live in dignity without fear and to grow up in a safe environment surrounded by friends and family.

The Government of **Iraq** pays high attention to the rights of the children. Therefore, numerous strategies and policies have been adopted to address the recruitment-related issues, including the national policy to prevent recruitment of children and minors in terrorist groups 2024-2029 and the national strategy to protect children against violence and abuse in armed conflict, in addition to implementing the joint action plan between Iraq and the United Nations to prevent child recruitment. Special programmes to rehabilitate and reintegrate children affected by armed conflicts in the society were also developed, in addition to providing psychological, social and



educational support to children, along with food, shelter and health care. Iraq reaffirms its commitment to all human rights instruments and the zero tolerance of Iraq to recruitment of children in armed conflicts.

Malawi commends the SRSR for outlining the challenges faced and progress achieved in addressing grave violations against children during armed conflicts. It is concerning to note that during the reporting period alone, tens of thousands of children were affected by armed conflict across the globe and suffered abhorrent abuses and violations of their most basic rights. The continued violations are a clear indication that there is a need to adopt a broad strategy of conflict prevention, which addresses the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner. This would enhance the protection of children on a long-term basis. Further, Malawi urges the adoption of broad good governance registration and building of effective institutions to ensure a long-term promotion of sustainable development, public education, national reconciliation and respect for and protection of human rights broadly and rights of the child. Malawi takes note of the SRSR's recommendation and urges all states and other actors to comply with their obligations to protect children as provided under the international law.

Malta joins the SRSR in expressing profound concern at the rise in grave violations against children by 21% in 2023, according to the latest report, despite efforts being undertaken by various actors. After almost a quarter of a century since the creation of the Children and Armed Conflict (CAC) mandate, the international community must remain steadfast in its commitment to address the plight of children in war-torn countries. Malta supports the SRSR's call for increased funding towards the implementation of the CAC mandate. Over the past years, Malta has consistently funded training on children and armed conflict, including the CAC primer that is freely available online and CAC advanced training course that concluded recently. Furthermore, ensuring that the rights of children, not least in conflict zones, are safeguarded is another area where more work is needed, and Malta is proud to have joined the 'Prove It Matters' campaign launched yesterday.

South Africa thanks the SRSR for her comprehensive report, which serves as a solemn reminder of the plight of countless children forcibly recruited and used in armed conflict. It further underscores the urgent need for collective action to protect their rights and ensure their well-being. South Africa shares the SRSR's concern regarding the denial of humanitarian access for children in conflict zones and its consequent negative impact on the delivery of essential services to children, undermining the protection and well-being of children in conflict zones. While acknowledging the efforts made to address these realities, South Africa notes that more still needs to be done. It therefore urges all states to take immediate and decisive action to implement the recommendations outlined in the report to enhance children's protection in conflict-affected areas, including the following actions: comply with IHL and IHRL; adopt national legislation to prohibit and criminalise the recruitment and use of children; and ensure an impeded humanitarian access, protecting educational institutions and allocating sufficient resources and strengthening a child-rights-based approach. By aligning national legislation with international standards and actively participating in global efforts, we can all significantly contribute to the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

According to **Chile**, the broad consensus in the international community as to the duty of states to promote and protect children's rights compels us to draw attention to the vulnerable situation



that children face in armed conflicts. Ukraine is one of the areas of conflict where serious violations against children occur daily. As explained in the report, parties to the conflict are responsible for avoiding deaths and mutilations as a result of exposure to explosive weapons, landmines and weapons of war. The loss of educational opportunities due to the war affects the opportunities for children in the future and this leads to lasting effects on social and economic development for their communities. In Gaza, access to education has been severely hampered as a consequence of armed attacks on schools and educational centres. As a consequence, children are more vulnerable to other serious violations and this in turn increases the probability that we see new cycles of violence and conflict.

The **State of Palestine** emphasizes that the deliberate targeting of Palestinian children by Israel Occupying Power is not a tragic by-product of conflict. It is an intentional strategy of extermination. Since October 2023, over 17,000 Palestinian children have been killed, thousands more maimed, orphaned and displaced, while millions endure starvation as a weapon of war. Additionally, 350 children remain in Israeli detention centres, subjected to widespread abuse, including sexual assault. These are not incidental casualties, but the direct result of a military strategy that flagrantly violates fundamental principles of international law. Despite overwhelming evidence of Israeli crimes that meet the threshold of genocide under the Genocide Convention, the SRSG's report fails to apply the necessary legal framing to these atrocities. Furthermore, the false equivalence drawn between Israel, a nuclear-armed Occupying Power, and Palestinian armed groups distorts reality and undermines accountability. Under international law, state actors, particularly Occupying Powers, bear the highest obligations to protect civilians, especially children. Yet Israel acts with total impunity, its crimes sanitised through diplomatic ambiguity. The denial of humanitarian access, the forced displacement of children, and systematic obliteration of Gaza's future cannot be ignored or diluted through vague language. Palestine calls on the SRSG to uphold justice and accountability with consistency, not merely by urging adherence to international law, but by calling for concrete measures to hold Israel accountable for its war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Failure to do so will embolden further atrocities and betray the very mandate meant to protect children in armed conflict.

Egypt notes that the SRSG's report raises concerns over the continued escalation of children's situation in conflict areas, as well as the gross violations, including forced recruitment, killing and maiming, as well as sexual violations and attacks against hospitals and schools, which deprive them of their most basic rights, including the right to life. In this respect, Egypt reaffirms the need to take concrete actions to strengthen accountability of violations of children's rights in armed conflicts. It also affirms that all parties to the armed conflicts must respect IHL.

Thanking the SRSG for her report and for her work to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict, **Albania** stresses that preventing and ending gross violations against children in conflict zones remains one of the most pressing issues. Albania shares the SR's concern regarding the scale and gravity of gross violations committed against children in armed conflict and echoes her call on all parties to comply with their international obligations and take all necessary measures to protect children during military operations. Albania supports her call on the importance to ratify or accede to the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and endorses various international political commitments aimed at



ending and preventing grave violations against children. In close consultation with international organisations and civil society, Albania has developed several policies and initiatives aimed at protecting children returning from conflict zones in line with our National Child Protection Policy and international obligations. These efforts include psychological support, rehabilitation, education and reintegration programmes. To conclude, Albania emphasises that international coordination is essential to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict and to ensure compliance with international child protection standards.

Belgium recalls that 2024 was one of the worst years in history for children in conflict. They face a daily struggle for survival that deprived them not only of their safety and access to basic services but also their chance to play, learn and grow. The ongoing extreme levels of violence against children in armed conflict is of great concern to Belgium. It underlines the enormous importance of your mandate and work. Belgium is alarmed by the unprecedented scale of grave violations against the children of the DRC, particularly in the East, where we are witnessing a severe escalation of violence as a result of the offensive by the M23 armed group, which is supported by the Rwanda Defence Forces. Summary executions, sexual violence, recruitment, abduction and attacks against schools and hospitals are daily realities for children in the DRC. Belgium calls on all conflict parties to implement or urgently develop action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children.

Nigeria strongly opposes any portrayal of the government as inactive or indifferent. It rejects comparisons with nations experiencing ongoing conflict, as such categorisation disregards the country's progress and fails to reflect its unique concepts, particularly the insurgency by non-state actors. A fundamental principle of the government of Nigeria is its firm commitment to the protection of children, particularly those affected by armed conflict. To demonstrate this commitment, Nigeria has implemented comprehensive measures at all levels of government in partnership with allies and international partners to safeguard children in conflict zones. Significant progress verified by the UN has been made through the Civilian Child Tax Force to end child recruitment. In addition, Nigeria has endorsed and actively implemented the Safe School Declaration. It has domesticated the Child Rights Act in 34 out of its 36 states of the Federation, ratified the Optional Protocol on the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts, and endorsed the Paris Principles. Finally, Nigeria remains committed to prioritising the protection of every child within its borders, recognising that every child deserves not only the right to live, but also the opportunity to strive to be safe.

Algeria reiterates its long-standing commitment to protect human rights during armed conflict based on our constitutional and international obligations, as a State Party to the CRC and the Optional Protocol and the Safe Schools Declaration. Article 80 of the Penal Code forbids recruitment without permission from the legal authorities, and the recruitment of persons under 18 is prohibited. Law 1512 is dedicated to the protection of children and it references the CRC and the two Optional Protocols. Algeria affirms the State's responsibility to ensure safeguarding children's rights in times of conflict and outside of conflict. Algeria is deeply concerned over the grave violations against children in multiple conflicts, including in the OPT, children being displaced and deprived from basic services in flagrant disregard and violation of IHL. Algeria condemns these actions, and calls upon the international community to shoulder its



responsibilities and take urgent measures to protect Palestinian children and make sure there is no impunity vis-à-vis those actions.

The **Maldives** thanks the SRSG on Children in Armed Conflict for her report and expresses deep concern over the escalating violations of children's rights in armed conflicts worldwide. Children are the foundation of our future, yet armed conflict remains one of the greatest threats to their rights, lives, and well-being. Nowhere is this more evident than in Palestine, where Israel's brutal and indiscriminate attacks have inflicted immense suffering on children. When the children of Palestine fled their homes due to heavy bombing, Israel bombed the various schools and hospitals which they sought shelter in and killed them along with their families. Attacks on schools and hospitals during conflict is one of the six grave violations identified and condemned by the UN Security Council. Urgent action from the international community is needed now more than ever to uphold the recent ceasefire agreement and prevent further suffering and loss of life. Israel is not exempt from fulfilling its obligations under international law, which applies equally to all member states. For too long, Israel has been allowed impunity for its crimes against humanity. The Maldives calls on all states to use their power to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law and ensure unhindered access to humanitarian aid for the children in Gaza.

Oman thanks the SRSG for her report which highlighted the various grave violations that are suffered by children in various conflict zones. This includes attacks on schools and hospitals and using them for military purposes, in addition to denial of humanitarian access, among many practises that breach the international commitments of parties to the conflict. We cannot turn the blind eye to what children are suffering in various hotspots, including and particularly the miseries of the Palestinian children who are deprived of every right, including the right to life, as well as their displacement, their starvation and their deprivation of medicine and education. The Occupying Power has been for months targeting various facilities and areas of civil living and community. We need to collectively work in favour of the protection of children and make sure that they live in a stable and safe environment away from the scourge of armed conflict so that they can grow in a dignified and safe manner.

Colombia values the SRSG's report and thanks her for the efforts and the documentation of follow-up of serious violations of children's rights in the context of armed conflict. Colombia has worked to prevent and eradicate such violations. We would highlight the sentence of the Constitutional Court issued in January 2024 that prohibits the public forces from connecting minors in civic and military activities in areas of conflict. Recently, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace revealed that recruitment of minors happened in rural areas with high levels of poverty and where there was little state presence. Furthermore, the report on sexual violence connected to armed conflict in Colombia published in June of 2024 by the SRSG recalls the need to strengthen care for victims with a gender-based and differentiated focus. Sexual violence in armed conflicts continues to be one of the most unseen and devastating violations for children. Colombia is committed to re-bolstering mechanisms for protection, reporting and reintegration in order to guarantee comprehensive remedy for affected children. It appeals to the international community to redouble efforts in protecting children in the context of armed conflict and we urge all armed actors to respect IHL and to immediately halt the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Children cannot continue to be victims of cycles of violence.



Iran is on the view that in conflict-stricken areas like Gaza, severe challenges like poverty, infectious disease, loss of education, displacement and other war-related scourges have its highest impact on children and minors that in most cases result in long-lasting impacts that even go beyond generations. Every day the children of Gaza face the devastating impacts of violence, displacement and deprivation. Since the outbreak of the most recent hostilities by occupier, hundreds of thousands of children in Gaza face lack of access to basic needs such as clean water, food or medical care. According to reports from the UN agencies and human rights organisations, the toll on children is appalling. Tens of thousands killed and many ore injured. The psychological trauma inflicted upon these children will last for generations. Iran urges the international community to force occupying Israel to lift the illegal blockade imposed on Gaza, which has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. In this context, it welcomes the efforts of the SRSG and highly recommends her to focus on ensuring accountability for violations committed against children in Gaza, including the re-establishment of mechanisms to monitor violations.

Russia strongly condemns all six grave violations committed against minors. In armed conflicts, all guilty parties must be held accountable in strict accordance with international law. Russia noted the insistent promotion in the SRSG's report of the expansive interpretation of the scope of the mandate using the wording 'conflict affected children'. This approach is incompatible with terminology used by relevant UNSC resolutions. Such hazy interpretation means that this is not limited to a timeline of a conflict or the war zone. Therefore, it cannot be directly related to the mandate of the SRSG which concerns exclusively minors and armed conflicts and not children in general. Russia deems it unacceptable that the SRSG is attempting to impose obligations under documents which were adopted by a restricted group of countries outside of the UN such as the Paris and Vancouver Principles and the Safe Schools Declaration. Russia calls on Ms. Gamba's successor to the post of SRSG to consider these concerns and structure their future activities in strict accordance with the mandate entrusted to them.

China notes the SRSG's report and work. Issues including obstructing humanitarian assistance, attacks on education, and specific impacts on children's education and birth registrations are of great concern. The fundamental way to protect children from armed conflict is through permanent ceasefire, lasting peace. International communities should make full use of political dialogue, mediation, peaceful negotiations to jointly promote a peaceful resolution of conflicts and defusing wars and hostilities. At the same time, it is also necessary to reconstruct people's livelihood; eradicate hunger and poverty; rebuild schools: provide a healthy environment for growth and quality education for children. China is always a builder of world peace and a stable force amid turbulent world. China actively explores solutions to hotspot issues while upholding the principles of non-interference, objectivity, fairness, dialogue, consultation, and political resolution of problems. China advocates safeguarding human rights through security practises. The Global Security Initiative stands for continuing work with all to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

Cameroon remains strongly committed to protecting children affected by armed conflict. It ratified the Optional Protocol on the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and applies a strict policy of voluntary recruitment with minimum age of 18. Significant efforts have been deployed to limit enlistment of children. In 2023, for example, 1785 minors were entered into demobilisation, deradicalization and reintegration centres. These centres provide



psychosocial, educational and vocational support for young people, offering them new alternative avenues to violence. Initiatives to fight extremism amongst young people are also underway, notably promoting social cohesion and attacking the deep root causes of radicalisation. As a part of this, a protocol was signed in November 2024 with Egypt. This was a step forward. Cameroon is also working with the United Nations and the international community to find other ways to protect children and to ensure the sustainable reintegration of children.

Ireland recalls that in the first half of 2024 alone, the United Nations verified over 18000 grave violations against children, noting continuing levels of extreme violence and complete disregard for children's rights amid escalating conflicts and humanitarian crises. Ireland is deeply concerned by the extremely high level of killings and maiming of children in several contexts. Ireland calls on all parties to comply with their obligations under IHL and other relevant international legal frameworks to halt all violations against children and to take all necessary measures to protect children in conflict contexts without delay. It notes with great concern the worsening trends around the denial of humanitarian access to children and welcome the efforts of your office to enhance the monitoring and reporting of this grave violation and to mitigate its impact. Safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children should never be politicised. It is a fundamental prerequisite to the protection of children in situations of extreme vulnerability and the prevention of further harm.

Cuba voices once more its concern over the consequences of armed conflict on children. The prospects are not looking bright. There has been nine years of consecutive increase in the number of conflict with 2.4 billion dollars being spent on military expenditure, whereas resources are being spent on weapons. Despite efforts deployed over the last three decades to reduce poverty and child hunger, these are again on the rise, back to the 2005 levels. Israel is committing with impunity a genocide against the Palestinian people and it has benefited from the support of the United States in doing so and the complicit silence of others. More than 47,000 Palestinians have been killed, including 18,000 children. Many more, nobody knows how many, are buried under 42,000 tonnes of rubble, which will require decades to be cleared. The SRSG's report does not match the severity of the facts and events we are seeing. Much more must be done to raise the visibility of the situation of the Palestinian children.

Panama is deeply alarmed by the scale and severity of violence against children in armed conflicts, which has reached extreme levels in 2024, with alarming trends, such as the denial of humanitarian aid to children and attacks against schools. Panama echoes the SRSG's recommendations in order to ensure compliance with IHL, IHRL and other relevant international legal frameworks. Cluster munitions have caused multiple deaths and inflicted wounds and suffering on girls and boys around the world, including long after the end of the conflicts themselves. In 2023, 93% of the victims recorded were civilians, and out of that, 47% were girls and boys. The CRC coincides with the Convention on Cluster Munitions in various provisions, in particular Article 2 on non-discrimination and Article 19 on protection against violence. That is why, as thematic coordinator on assistance to victims under the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Panama hopes to work very closely with the SRSG and encourages her to participate in and contribute to the debates that take place in that forum.

Greece thanks the SRSG for her report and her support and cooperation in the context of Greece's tenure as an elected member of the UN Security Council. In this respect, Greece



strongly supports the new global campaign titled ‘Prove It Matters’ and shares the deep concern about the rise of grave violations committed against children by warring parties in complete disregard for IHL and IHRL. It is a sign of our collective failure that the number of children killed or maimed has reached record numbers over the past two years. Greece also reaffirms its commitment to substantially contribute to the effective implementation of the protective framework on children in armed conflict and the mainstreaming throughout the UN system. It needs to be emphasised that 60% of deaths and maiming of children in conflict zones is mainly attributable to indiscriminate use of aerial bombardment in urban areas, which is deplorable and unacceptable and must be addressed as an immediate priority. Particular emphasis should also be placed on actions aimed at reducing the number of deaths and maiming of children in post-conflict areas, which account for 40% of the total and to reinforcing accountability for violations committed against children. These are areas where significant progress can be made. But progress can only be made through strong political will and partnerships.

The **United Kingdom** reaffirms its commitment to your mandate and its support for the ‘Prove It Matters’ campaign. Grave violations against children in conflict have risen on a shocking scale in recent years. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia, Sudan and Ukraine, children are paying the highest price. Member states must come together to do more to protect children. Children should have a say in matters that affect them. Last May, the UK convened a ministerial level roundtable with girls from Ukraine, the West Bank, the DRC and South Sudan. They spoke powerfully about the importance of education, mental health and psychosocial support for conflict-affected children. The UK will continue to amplify the needs, rights and voices of children in conflict.

The **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** thanks the SRSG for the report and her tireless efforts to ensure respect for the rights of children in difficult contexts and complicated armed conflicts. With assistance from other partners, NGOs, UNICEF and MONASCO, the DRC has been able to implement a plan of action to help children, delisting the DRC as a country that recruits children into their army, demobilisation and reintegration of children into educational systems. Since January 2025, the escalation of the Rwanda army with M23 has seen violations of the rights of children. Since the press communique of 26 February 2025 of UNICEF, numerous violations against children in the east of the DRC have tripled over the recent months. According to UNICEF, sexual violence against children has more than doubled. Kidnappings have been multiplied by six, murders and mutilations by seven, attacks against schools and hospitals multiplied by twelve, without counting the massive recruitment targeting young people. Despite this major challenge, the DRC continues to count on the work of the Office of the SRSG and on cooperation with the Fact-Finding Mission established under resolution of 7 February 2025 in order to ensure respect of all the rights of all children.

Thanking the SRSG for her report, **Qatar** voices its deeply concern and condemns the continued attacks against children in armed conflict. This threatens their psychological and physical integrity and underscores the importance of ensuring that their rights are protected in peacetime and wartime. Qatar urges parties to conflicts to respect their commitments to protect children from the horrors of war and to ensure that they are kept out of violence. As part of our regional and international strategic partnerships, Qatar has placed a priority on the protection of children, launching initiatives in various key sectors such as education, healthcare, providing drinking



water and provision of humanitarian aid to relieve the burden of a war that lies on the shoulders of children. Qatar is also working to shore up the role of the Office of the SRSG by hosting a centre for analysis and outreach in Doha following an agreement last February to continue its support for the efforts to protect children in armed conflict.

Georgia stresses that Russia's war against Ukraine continues to have devastating effects on children. Georgia further draws the Council's attention the dire humanitarian and human rights situation in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, where people residing therein regularly face grave human rights violations. Russia's ongoing occupation and its effective control over both Georgian regions, which has been confirmed by the decision of international courts, places conflict-affected children in extremely dire situations. One of the most concerning human rights violations, among others, remains the prohibition of education in the native Georgian language for children. To conclude, Georgia is committed to strengthening relevant international legal instruments, including the fulfilment of the Optional Protocol to the CRC, and also actively cooperates with international initiatives such as Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers.

Malaysia thanks the SRSG for her sound and insightful report. Malaysia is deeply alarmed by the unprecedented scale and severity of violations committed against children in the ongoing global armed conflicts. During military operations, children are entitled to special protection under IHL and IHRL in accordance with the principles of proportionality and precaution. But this has not been the case for children living in conflict situations who are experiencing violence in unbearable levels. In Gaza, where the gravest violations have occurred, more than 70,000 children were indiscriminately killed in the span of 15 months, turning Gaza into a graveyard for children. Many others have been maimed, orphaned, and left to suffer in inhumane conditions without access to food, water, healthcare, and education. The deliberate and systematic targeting of children must not be tolerated under any circumstances. At this juncture, Malaysia calls on the international community to take decisive measures against Israel's intransigence in compliance with the provisional measures ordered by the ICJ.

Welcoming the SRSG's presentation, **Venezuela** is deeply concerned by the data contained in her report, kidnappings, forced recruitment, mutilations, and sexual violence. These are only some of the atrocities suffered by girls and boys in countries where conflicts are ongoing, and this requires the urgent attention of the international community. Venezuela puts special emphasis on the sufferings imposed on the children of Palestine by Israel. Once again, Venezuela firmly condemns the ongoing genocide carried out by Israel, which is leading to high levels of violence, malnutrition, destruction of schools and hospitals, and the death of more than 17,000 children since 2023. Therefore, Venezuela underscores the importance of an immediate and full ceasefire. It is essential to achieve peace in order to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights, especially for girls and boys.

Reiterating its support for the SRSG's mandate, **France** recalls the crucial role played by the monitoring and communication system for the serious violations committed against children in armed conflicts. According to the SRSG's and UNICEF reports, 2024 was one of the most tragic for children drawn into armed conflicts. Restrictions and obstacles preventing humanitarian access is a growing and concerning term in Gaza, Sudan and in Ukraine. France calls for safe, unfettered humanitarian access. France will also continue to stand alongside all those who fight



for the return of Ukrainian children. Children too often are a target. Attacks on schools have increased by 60% by 2021, destroying not just school infrastructure, but also the very hopes and ambitions of whole generations of children. France calls for full respect for the respect of security and rights in schools. It also calls for a new framework for the reintegration, rehabilitation, demoralisation of children in line with the Paris Principles.

Lesotho commends the SRSG's efforts to increase engagement among Member States, international, regional and sub-regional organisations to document the troubling impact of armed conflict on children. Lesotho shares the SRSG's concerns over trends related to grave violations against children, including the denial of humanitarian assistance to those in conflict-affected regions. In particular, Lesotho strongly condemns all attacks against schools and hospitals made in breach of IHL. On an optimistic note, Lesotho recognises the steps taken by many states to eliminate the recruitment and use of children in armed forces as highlighted in the report. These steps play an important role in upholding children's rights, which are afforded a special protection under the CRC. In the same vein, Lesotho believes that a strong legal foundation is essential for respecting and protecting the children's rights. In this regard, Lesotho supports the SRSG's call for all states that have not yet done so to accede to the Optional Protocol of the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, a critical step in ensuring that no child is ever forced to experience the scourge of combat.

South Sudan is deeply concerned and appalled by the figures contained in the report on grave violations committed against children around the world despite international laws designed to protect them. South Sudan appreciates and commends the SRSG for recognising in the report the release of some 60 children from armed groups and national police service in South Sudan as a positive step in collaboration with the UN partners. South Sudan underscores its unwavering commitment to continue demobilising children from armed forces and to protect and safeguard their rights as a party to the CRC and its Optional Protocol. In this context, South Sudan has established mobile court martial to prosecute cases of grave violations committed by any army against children. The world must invest in peace, education, and justice to ensure a future where no child is forced to bear horrors of war.

Pakistan thanks the SRSG for presenting her report and laments the catastrophic situation in Palestine. Over the past year and a half of aggression by the illegal occupation forces, a dark stain will remain on the collective conscience of humanity. Of the nearly 43,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza, a third are children. Tens of thousands more are wounded, many of them with life-changing injuries. Palestinian children in the occupied West Bank also contend with a bleak outlook amid renewed military assault and unchecked settler colonialism. The occupied Palestine must not become either a graveyard for the innocent nor a breeding ground for despair. Pakistan echoes the SRSG's call for ensuring unimpeded access for humanitarian aid as well as services such as healthcare and education for all children. Pakistan condemns in the strongest possible terms the illegal Occupying Power's recent decision to block critical humanitarian aid from entering occupied Gaza. This is part of a systematic campaign to deny even the barest subsistence for millions of Palestinians in dire need. Pakistan calls on the international community to ensure unrestricted humanitarian access to Gaza and hold Israel accountable for imposition of collective punishment.



Armenia states that the SRSG's report confirms the rise of alarming trends in violent acts against children during armed conflicts, which include the denial of humanitarian access, attacks on schools, to name a few. These violations inflict immediate harm and have long-term consequences of children's physical and psychological well-being. Meantime, the attacks on schools and obstacles to save access to human education make children even more vulnerable to other grave violations. Ensuring safe and uninterrupted access to schooling is crucial, not only for children's rights, but for all other rights, since education is an essential pillar for protection and realisation of all other rights. These complex challenges underscore the urgent need for robust accountability mechanisms.

Thanking the SRSG for her report, **Rwanda** recommends the engagement with the United Nations country task forces on monitoring and reporting about grave violations against children in armed conflicts with a view to adopting concrete measures to prevent and end grave violations. Since 1994, genocide against Tutsi, Rwanda has prioritised development and safeguarded fundamental rights of children, including rehabilitation and integration programmes for those who have been affected by armed conflicts. However, the prevailing situation in Great Lakes region continues to destabilise the region with grave consequences for children. The FDR militia operating with impunity has recruited and used children in armed activities violating international law. The spillover effect of this conflict has directly impacted Rwanda, including the recent sharing from DRC that claimed 16 innocent lives, injured 177 people, among them children, and destroyed critical infrastructure, including schools. To conclude, Rwanda commends the call on raising awareness, mobilising global action, and building partnership to ensure protection of children's rights in armed conflict, as well as endorsing political commitments, notably the Paris Principles and the Safe School Declaration.

Ukraine extends its gratitude for the SRSG's invaluable work and highly values the cooperation established with her Office, including through the implementation of the Joint Preventive Action Plan. Despite all efforts, Ukraine's children continue to face the devastating reality of war. Diana, 12 years old, loved drawing, studying, and playing board games with her parents. Danilo, her seven-year-old brother, enjoyed mathematics and adored cats. Sofia, nine, needed and made bed work, which she gifted to Ukrainian defenders. These three children were killed on 1 February 2025 in Poltava alongside their parents as a result of Russian missile strike. Every week, at least 16 children are killed or wounded, often far from the front lines. Meanwhile, thousands are abducted by Russia and subjected to indoctrination. This clearly demonstrates that Ukrainian children are not just victims of war. They are deliberate targets. In this regard, Ukraine welcomes the decision of the UN Secretary-General to keep the Russian armed forces and affiliated groups on the list of grave violators for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals.

Lebanon thanks the SRSG for her report and introductory remarks, which are a sobering reminder of the need to confirm the grave violations against children in armed conflicts. In this regard, Lebanon reiterates its full support to IHL. Sadly, Lebanon has recently endured another brutal military aggression by Israel that has tragically taken a shocking toll on children, affecting almost every aspect of their lives, as UNICEF noted in its recent report. Lebanese children's rights to life, safety, security, education and health have been severely violated during this war. The use of prohibited weapons has threatened their right to a healthy and sustainable environment. Many



have been killed or wounded. Others have been forced to flee their homes, while massive and extensive damage to their lives has left them vulnerable for years to come. Many will suffer prolonged periods of traumatic stress. The future and the development of any country heavily depend on the well-being of its children. Lebanon is counting on all the support that it can get in this field.

Ethiopia expresses its continued commitment to the protection and fulfilment of the rights of children, particularly those affected by armed conflicts. Ethiopia recognises the profound impact of conflict on children and reaffirms its commitment to protecting their rights under both domestic and international legal frameworks, including the CRC. The Government of Ethiopia has taken concrete steps to protect children, especially following the signing of the Pretoria Peace Agreement to end the conflict in the northern region of the country. To this end, the Response, Recovery, and Resilience Initiative for conflict-affected communities has played a key role in rebuilding primary schools and restoring healthcare services in conflict-impacted areas. This Initiative demonstrates Ethiopia's steadfast commitment to creating a safe environment for children and enabling their full development. Ethiopia firmly believes that peace is essential for safeguarding children's rights. The Government of Ethiopia will continue to prioritise peacebuilding efforts to create conducive environment for children and put an end to violations against them. Ethiopia calls on the international community to strengthen cooperation in addressing the challenges faced by children in conflict.

Sudan thanks the SRSR for her annual report and recommendations. The report states that human rights violations in Sudan are occurring, generally speaking, without actually pointing to the responsible party. Since April 2023, my country has been facing a fierce war launched by militias and mass violations have been committed against the state and civil society. Children have suffered severe violations. The second report by the National Commission of Enquiry submitted to the UNHRC indicates that children have been forcibly enlisted and therefore some have been killed, others have been wounded and others have been disabled. Children have been held in detention centres, as indicated in the report of the High Commissioner. Acts of sexual violence and sexual slavery were also recorded. In the west of Darfur, children were targeted, depending on their ethnicity, and the militia targeted hospitals and schools, occupying them for military purposes. Sudan urges the UNHRC to firmly condemn these atrocities.

As conflicts persist in different regions across the globe, children continue to endure immense suffering. Terrorists and armed groups continue to violate children's rights. In this respect, **India** recalls that states bear the primary responsibility for safeguarding children's rights, as outlined in the CRC. India urges Member States to ratify the Option Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. Sexual violence, exploitation and other severe abuses against children carried out by terrorists require increased attention and decisive action. Children are particularly susceptible to being indoctrinated by violent extremist ideologies aimed at promoting terrorism. Strong and decisive measures from governments in areas where such terrorist groups operate are crucial to addressing this issue. The significance of quality education and skill development in alleviating the adverse effects of conflict cannot be overstated. Leveraging digital technologies for education, vocational training and psychosocial support offers new opportunities for children in conflict zones. Protecting schools, especially for girls, and healthcare facilities is crucial. Children's reintegration into society affected by armed conflict



needs greater focus. Children are future of humankind. Protecting childhoods is safeguarding humanity. In closing, India reaffirms its strong commitment to supporting the SRSG's efforts in safeguarding children in armed conflict situations.

Azerbaijan remains deeply concerned about the continuing threats posed by landmines, which, as the report highlights, remains a major cause of child casualties in armed conflict. Azerbaijan is one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world, with over 10,000 square kilometres of land littered with mines. Since the end of the conflict, 357 Azerbaijani children have fallen victim to these landmines. These indiscriminate weapons do not differentiate between a soldier and an innocent child. Despite these challenges, Azerbaijan is committed to ensuring the safe return of internally displaced persons. Large-scale demining efforts continue, and mine-risk education programmes are being implemented to raise awareness among children and families. However, without comprehensive and accurate minefield maps, the process remains slow and dangerous. Azerbaijan reiterates its call for those responsible to provide this critical information to prevent further child casualties and emphasises the right of children to return to normalcy after armed conflict must be safeguarded.

Afghanistan welcomes the SRSG's report. As grave violations against children persist across Afghanistan. Despite the latter's accession to the relevant Optional Protocol to the CRC, the report details the highest number of denial of humanitarian access verified in Afghanistan, attacks against schools and related personnel, which has gravely impacted the right to education and the lack of legal documentation, leaving children more vulnerable to grave violations. The situation will only worsen without immediate, concrete action. Afghanistan echoes the report's recommendation for the UNHRC to incorporate children's rights violations into its resolution. Afghanistan alongside CSOs and the SR reiterate the call for the establishment of an independent investigative mechanism for Afghanistan with dedicated expertise on child rights.

Views Expressed by intergovernmental Organizations

The **European Union (EU)** reiterates its strong support for her mandate, including to its renewal this year by the UNGA and to the need to ensure sufficient expertise in child protection, such as child protection advisors and officer posts. The EU is deeply concerned by the alarming level of grave violations against children in conflict contexts. 2024 saw record numbers of killings, maiming and other abuses, including trafficking, widespread yet vastly underreported incidences of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, with girls disproportionately affected. Despite some progress, impunity remains a major challenge, with perpetrators rarely held accountable. The EU is strongly committed to ending the cycle of impunity and ensuring full accountability for grave violations of children's rights, as outlined in the EU's updated Children in Armed Conflict Framework published in 2024. The EU therefore reiterates its call on all states to hold those responsible for grave violations to account, including those at the highest level who fail to prevent such violations, and encourage cooperation with international justice mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court.

UNICEF welcomes the report of the SRSG and her efforts to strengthen the protection of conflict-affected children. The trends in grave violations highlighted in the report illustrates the annus horribilis for children in 2024. During the first half of 2024 only, over 18,000 grave violations against nearly 12,000 children were verified. These were attributed to the splintering of existing or



emergence of new armed actors, inter-criminal violence, the use of explosive weapons and the presence of explosive remnants of war. Children pay a heavy price for conflicts that did not start and cannot stop, often with their lives. In that context, UNICEF is encouraged by the activities taken by the SRSG, most importantly her support to the country task forces on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in countries on the agenda of the Security Council. UNICEF shares the three areas of concerns outlined by the SRSG and urges parties to conflict to urgently take concrete measures to prevent and end grave violations against children, including through the adoption of action plans with the United Nations, for Member States to leverage their influence over parties to better protect children and for all Member States to reaffirm the indispensable mandate of the Children in Armed Conflict agenda and its monitoring and reporting mechanism.

The **Sovereign Order of Malta**, which has a long history of providing health care and education to children through humanitarian projects and clinics in Africa, Europe, and the Holy Land, is deeply concerned by the grave violations of children's rights highlighted by the SRSG. On the occasion of the recent Vatican Summit on the Rights of the Child held in Rome, as well as in Geneva and New York at the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, the Sovereign Order of Malta reaffirmed its commitment to advocating for the protection of children in armed conflict and called for increased international cooperation to address these violations. The Order of Malta supports the recommendations of the SRSG to end and prevent grave violations against children, strengthen legal frameworks, ensure access to education by protecting schools, guarantee humanitarian access, and enhance global partnerships to support reintegration and rehabilitation programmes. The Sovereign Order of Malta would welcome an increased collaboration with the special representative.

The **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** appreciate the tireless advocacy of the SRSG in amplifying the voices of children affected by conflict across the world. The situation we face is indeed very bleak. At the same time, the OIC shares the view that the gravity of the ongoing violations of children's rights, in particular in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT), deserves more explicit attention and a stronger call for action. While regretfully noting that the report recognises a certain hierarchy in terms of situations with the highest numbers of children, affected by grave violations globally, it fails to properly name the most affected populations and children, instead using a confusing, misleading and unusual reference by naming the Occupying Power and the territories it occupies in duality. According to UNICEF, over 1.5 million children in the OPT are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Yet the Occupying Power continues to weaponize aid to Gaza in blatant disregard of the international law. The new siege imposed by Israel 12 days ago has further deprived the population of basic services and essential goods, including access to water. Cutting off electricity is yet another barbaric act compounding the already dire humanitarian crisis. This deliberate denial of humanitarian aid, amounting to collective punishment, must end immediately.

Views Expressed by National Human Rights Institutions

The **National Independent Commission of Human Rights of Burundi** explains that the Arusha peace agreement signed between the various stakeholders in Burundi in 2000 put an end to the civil war and violence against children during armed conflict in Burundi. Having learned the lessons from that conflict, Burundi ratified the main international legal instruments on child



protection. Burundi has also availed itself of policies and institutions dedicated to child protection. Although this is commendable, the upsurge in wars and a multiplication of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are exposing Burundian children to the risk of enlistment and human trafficking. To address this risk, the Commission recommends that the government step up control of population movements at the borders and to monitor compliance with the rules on the issuance of travel documents for minors. The Commission also notes the need to continue taking preventive measures to avoid radicalisation of children by political parties. It also encourages the Government to step up cooperation with civil society organisations, which work on child protection to ensure greater synergies and more effective prevention. Finally, it recommends its government adopt a single child rights code.

The **Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights** thanks the SRSG for her efforts in compiling and presenting her reports. Gaza, as UNICEF described, is the world's most dangerous place to be a child. Israeli forces have turned childhood into a death sentence, systematically killing, injuring and disappearing Palestinian children. Since October 7th, at least 18,000 children in Gaza have been killed, including 2,100 infants under two years old. Many were deliberately bombed in their homes, shelters and hospitals. Those who survived face starvation, disease and trauma that will mark them for life. The Israeli occupation is also imprisoning and torturing Palestinian children. At least 900 children have been arbitrarily detained in the West Bank, while 365 remain in detention, including 100 held without trial. Many face brutal torture, forced confessions and inhuman conditions. These are crimes against humanity, yet Israel continues with impunity. The Commission calls on the UNHRC and the international community to move beyond condemnations and take concrete action. End Israeli impunity, impose sanctions and hold it accountable for its systematic war crimes.

The **Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights** extends his gratitude to the SRSG for keeping the situation of children in armed conflicts around the world, including Ukraine, in constant focus and for the reports presented. According to the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, 599 Ukrainian children have been killed, 1,773 have been injured, and 16 children have been subjected to sexual violence. Thousands were deported or forcibly displaced. These numbers are growing daily. As part of the joint prevention plan, Ukraine is demonstrating its constant commitment to protect children. At the same time, Russia continues to cynically commit gross violations against children within its armed aggression. The Commissioner calls on states to contribute to ending violations against children in Ukraine. He further calls for assistance in search, identification, visiting places of stay, and return of deported or forcibly displaced Ukrainian children. The Commissioner highly values the interaction with the UN and believes that through joint efforts, we will be able to protect children.

The **Ethiopian Human Rights Commission** explains that different parts of Ethiopia have been affected by conflict, including active armed conflict in Ahmara region and violence in other regions, with devastating impact on children. Additionally, the situation for children in post-conflict Tigray and Afar regions remains dire. Since November 2020, the Commission has documented multiple cases of sexual violence against children in situations of conflict, particularly in Tigray, Afar, and Amhara regions, in violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The number of IDPs has risen, with 53% of them being children, many



separated from their families. Displaced children are exposed to human trafficking and forced migration, and girls face heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence. Children's rights to education have been affected. Over 6,000 schools have been destroyed, leaving millions of students out of school. As a result, children face increased risk of child marriage, labour exploitation, and substance abuse. The destruction of healthcare facilities, loss of ambulances, and shortage of essential medical supplies have severely impacted children's rights to health, leaving newborns and pregnant women without critical care. The Commission welcomes the ongoing transitional justice and national dialogue processes. However, much more is required. Protecting children in conflict-affected regions must be a national priority.

Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations

The **International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDEL)** underscores that the child exists as a part of the family. Parents are the primary source of guidance during a child's early development in life, providing the child with stability. The parent-child bond reinforces the fact that the family exists as a unit, not as a group of disparate individuals. The family unit acts as a last line of defence for vulnerable children when conflict affects societies, and accordingly must be protected most vigorously in conflict zones. We must ask ourselves, what can human rights mechanisms accomplish to protect those most vulnerable in times of crisis? Today, children in conflict zones are being forcibly separated from the family in numerous ways and being deprived of their human rights as a result. They are removed from their family's custody and relocated to other countries to be indoctrinated through compulsory education and used for propaganda. Elsewhere, they are being denied the right to education entirely, along with the right to health care. In extreme cases, institutions necessary for these rights - hospitals and schools - are being systematically targeted and destroyed. In some conflict zones, children are injured and killed indiscriminately alongside adult civilians. These instances, and others happening every day, destroy the family unit, leaving children without effective guidance in their most formative years. Will the international community emphasise the family as one of the most vulnerable communities suffering through all crises?

The **Medical Support Association for Underprivileged Iranian Patients** stresses that the ongoing armed conflict in Gaza has had a devastating impact on children who bear the brunt of violence, displacement, and suffering. According to Gaza's government media office, Israel has killed about 18,000 children since the genocide began. Thousands of children lost body organs, suffering lifeline disabilities, and urgently requiring rehabilitation they are not receiving. Israeli atrocities resulted in about 21,000 children go missing, 17,000 children to be on a campaign, 4,000 to perish under the rubble, and an unknown number being in mass graves. According to UNICEF, one million children in Gaza are experiencing severe psychological trauma. In January 2025 in Lebanon, 70% of caregivers complained about the psychological impacts of war on children even after the ceasefire. The international community has a legal and moral obligation to protect children in Gaza and to hold perpetrators accountable for violations of international law. Deeply alarmed by the devastating impacts of war on children, it calls on the SRS to engage with the UN Member States, raise awareness about the plight of children in Gaza, and encourage international cooperation for their protection.

Plan International voices concerns over children in conflict do not have the luxury of introductions. No one asks for their names before they are forced to flee their homes, before their



schools are bombed, before they are recruited into wars they never started. Today's speech is for the children whose voices are too often ignored. The ones who lose their futures before they even begin. We as privileged members of the international community owe them our attention and dedicated effort. We must ensure unhindered humanitarian aid reaches children. We must view schools as safe havens and protect teachers and students alike. We must push for accountability in nations to prevent child recruitment into armed groups and exploitations. Most importantly, to all the governments and representatives gathered in this room, Plan International urges to speak directly to the children in conflict themselves. They are almost never directly heard from at the conferences that shape their lives. It's one thing to read their reports and talk to adult representatives, but another to truly listen to their fears and hopes directly. This is what Plan International's Unite for Peace advocates for. It stands in solidarity with girls in crisis to ensure that they are seen as future autonomous leaders entitled to protection, education, and the chance to rebuild their lives. Children need commitment. They need your action. They need governments to increase and sustain funding for these programmes. They are children whose inherent rights are being denied. Your decisions today will dictate their futures. So learn their names, learn their stories, and leverage your unique privilege to grant.

Jameh Ehyagan Teb Sonnati Va Salamat Iranian explains that children caught in armed conflicts are among the most vulnerable victims of our world's failure to uphold their fundamental rights guaranteed under international law. In 2024, the war in Gaza resulted in the deaths of at least 12,300 innocent Gazan children. According to UNRWA, the children killed recently in Gaza are more than in four years of conflict worldwide. A number of children in Gaza have died from hypothermia recently because of the lack of proper shelter, as Israel has failed to adhere to its ceasefire pledge to allow temporary homes and tents into the strip. Just a few days ago, seven children, including a two-month-old girl, have died from the cold. Moreover, in Lebanon, Israeli strikes led to the deaths of more than 248 children. These numbers represent not just statistics but the loss of innocent lives. In Yemen, over two million children are suffering from malnutrition due to the war since 2015. The international community must urgently act to protect children in conflict zones and hold those responsible accountable for their actions. It calls on all governments and international organisations to prioritise the rights and well-being of children in conflict zones, ensuring that they have a future to look forward to.

Defence for Children International (DCI) welcomes the annual report of the SRSG and expresses concern over the massive number of children deprived of liberty in conflict zones. In particular, we are faced with an urgent and grave humanitarian crisis in the Al-Hol and Roj camps in North East Syria, often considered the most dangerous place to be a child. Today, about 40,000 people, of which many children, remain detained in life-threatening conditions amidst renewed hostilities. Research by Human Rights Watch has found that 80% of these children are under 12 years old. They have lived all their life in the camp and are too young to have actively participated in ISIL. Despite their right to identity, many governments refuse to repatriate them, citing national security risks or concerns about public opposition. In line with UN Security Council Resolution 2427, states should recognise that children who were detained for association with armed groups are first and foremost victims of grave abuses. The US Government's suspension of foreign aid to NGOs providing food and education in these camps has exacerbated the already dire conditions, risking further destabilisation. DCI calls upon all governments to end arbitrary detention of children with ISIL ties and ensure their repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration assistance.



Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights denounces that for 17 months, more than 1 million Palestinian children in Gaza have endured unimaginable horrors under Israel's genocide, hardships no child should ever have to endure. Israel's UN-sided war on Gaza has killed over 17,000 Palestinian children, while thousands more have been maimed, orphaned or left to die in inhumane conditions. Beyond the immense physical and mental suffering Israel has inflicted, it has also denied Gaza's children the right to education for two consecutive years. Schools have been bombed, and those still standing are packed with displaced families, leaving no space for learning. At this very moment, Israeli authorities are intentionally starving Palestinian children. Despite countless calls from the states present in this room for the unrestricted entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza, Israel continues to weaponize water, food and electricity, while keeping the crossings with Gaza closed for the 10th consecutive day. Several Palestinian children have already died from malnutrition and dehydration. How many more must die before the international community takes concrete action to stop Israel and hold its leadership accountable? The time for statements of condemnation has passed. Now it is time for accountability, sanctions and the serious review of bilateral agreements with Israel. The children of Gaza must not endure another day of suffering, starvation and fear. The moral and political responsibility to stop Israel's ongoing genocide risks on states. The time to act is now.

International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development (VIDES) welcomes the report of the SRSG on the situation of children in armed conflict. Education is both a fundamental right and it is essential for the realisation of other human rights. Yet in conflict zones, attacks on school result in the loss of learning opportunities, making children more vulnerable to exploitation and recruitment. Girls are particularly at risk since their schools are more frequently attacked and they are often being abducted on their way to school. Ensuring the right to education is critical to breaking cycles of violence and poverty. A concerning trend in conflict-ridden zones is the lack of guarantee for the rights of birth registration. Undocumented children are invisible and therefore more vulnerable to abduction, trafficking and other serious violations. Unregistered children who are separated from their families face even greater challenges. VIDES recommends states to first guarantee education for all children in armed conflict, with specific measures to ensure girls' access to education. Second, ensure birth registration for all children affected by armed conflict and prioritise family reunification for separated children. When reunification is not feasible, provide high-quality community-based alternative care solutions for children separated from their families.

World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations raises grave violations of Ukrainian children's rights resulting from Russia's full-scale invasion. Three years of war has stolen childhoods, torn families apart and inflicted physical and psychological harm. Ukrainian children have endured abduction, forced deportation and violence, all clear violations of international law. As of March 10, 2025, at least 599 children have been killed, 1,788 wounded, 2,057 reported missing and 16 sexually abused. Over 19,000 children have been forcibly deported to Russia and Belarus, stripped of their Ukrainian identity and subjected to forced adoptions and indoctrination. Despite international efforts, only a small fraction has been returned. Russia's relentless attack on civilian infrastructure, targeting schools, hospitals, energy facilities have killed and maimed thousands. Child casualties increased by over 50% in 2024, and one in five Ukrainian children has lost a close relative or a friend. Millions suffer from severe trauma with calls to the National Child Hotline reaching over 167,000 in 2024 alone. The Federation urges the



UNHRC to demand an immediate return of all abducted Ukrainian children and hold Russia accountable for war crimes. It calls for supporting ICC arrest warrants for those responsible for crimes against children. The forced displacement and targeting of Ukrainian children are crimes, and justice must be served.

The **Colombian Commission of Jurists** explains that in 2024, the armed conflict in Colombia continued to seriously affect civilians with a particular high impact on girls, boys and adolescents. Despite the ongoing negotiations with the armed groups in the context of the total peace policy, there were 317 warlike actions, including skirmishes, threats and persecution, affecting more than 44,000 children. The dissident factions of the FARC-EP and ELN were the main responsible for those events. It is alarming that the forced recruitment of girls, boys and adolescents remains a recurring practise of armed groups, including during peace negotiations. Despite the agreements which were signed in accordance with IHL and Colombian legislation, the People's Ombudsperson documented 409 cases of forcible recruitment of children in 2024. Since the start of this year, the intensification of the conflict worsened the humanitarian crisis in the Catatumbo region, where at least 43 children were recruited by armed groups. Moreover, forced displacement has affected 50,000 people at least, including 20,000 children. The Colombian Commission of Jurists calls on the SRSG and the UNHRC to urge the Colombian State to comply with its international obligations for childhood protection. Girls, boys and adolescents are a priority in peace negotiations.

Al Baraem Association for Charitable Work carries the voices of the silenced and oppressed people of Baluchistan. For decades, the Pakistani state has waged a relentless campaign of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and systematic repression against Baloch people. I bring to your urgent attention the recent abduction of Asma Jatta on February 6. Although she was released after three days, it was only due to immense public pressure and protests. This is just one of the countless stories. On February 4, PhD scholar Alladat Baloch was targeted and killed. And on February 11, Ayat Sabzan was murdered while in state custody. These incidents are not isolated. They are part of a calculated policy to eliminate educated, conscious voices in Baluchistan and to terrorise an entire population into silence. When people demand justice, they are met with threats, fabricated charges and restrictions on their movements. Institutions are meant to safeguard human rights have been weaponised against the people of Baluchistan, further silencing those who dare to speak out. The international community cannot remain indifferent to this systematic persecution. The Association urges the United Nations and all nations committed to justice to demand that Pakistan end enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, release forcibly disappeared persons and hold those responsible for these atrocities accountable.

FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

57 State Delegations

4 Inter-Governmental Organizations

4 National Human Rights Institutions

10 Non-Governmental Organizations