

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 5 July 2022 from the Permanent Representative of
Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the pleasure to inform you that Brazil, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of July 2022, will hold a high-level open debate on the theme “Children and armed conflict”, to be held on Tuesday, 19 July, at 10 a.m.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, Brazil has prepared a concept note (see annex). I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Ronaldo Costa Filho**
Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 5 July 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council high-level open debate on the theme “Children and armed conflict”, to be held on Tuesday, 19 July 2022

During its presidency of the Security Council, Brazil will organize a high-level open debate on the theme “Children and armed conflict”, to be held on 19 July 2022. As in previous years, the open debate will provide an opportunity for Member States to consider the findings of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict ([A/76/871-S/2022/493](#)). The open debate will also offer a space for discussion on the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda, with a particular focus on the following three topics: (a) the protection of refugee, internally displaced and stateless children; (b) the abduction of children and its differentiated impacts on girls and boys; and (c) the reintegration of children and peacebuilding.

Background

In the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict for 2022, the distressing reality faced by children in 21 situations and one regional monitoring arrangement in 2021 is highlighted. It is shown that, despite a slight decrease in grave violations compared with 2020, alarming trends remain. The killing and maiming of children remained the most significant verified violation, with more than 8,000 children affected, followed by the recruitment and use of children and incidents of denial of humanitarian access. Abductions and cases of sexual violence increased by over 20 per cent, and attacks on schools and hospitals increased by 5 per cent in a context of school closures owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the military use of schools, insecurity and a disregard for children’s rights to education and health.

The annual report depicts a dire situation, but progress on the protection of children has been made, including by the United Nations, in engaging with parties to conflicts in a number of situations, resulting, among other things, in the release of more than 12,200 children from armed groups and armed forces in 2021. Such engagement is crucial to move forward the children and armed conflict agenda, which cuts across the three pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights, and development.

Protection of refugee, internally displaced and stateless children

Millions of children around the globe have been forcibly displaced owing to armed conflict. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, children account for 41 per cent of all forcibly displaced people.¹ Worldwide, more than 36.5 million children have been forcibly displaced as a consequence of conflict and violence, as at the end of 2021. This number includes some 12.5 million child refugees, around 1.2 million asylum-seeking children and an estimated 22.8 million children displaced within their own country.² Displacement has a profound impact on children, no matter their legal status. It disrupts their lives, their relationships and their communities, and may lead to significant distress.

¹ See www.unhcr.org/62a9d1494/global-trends-report-2021.

² See <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/>.

Refugee, internally displaced and stateless children are at a higher risk of facing grave violations and other serious abuses, including recruitment and use by parties to conflict, sexual violence, trafficking and detention. Displaced children are reported to be transiting through informal border crossings, where armed groups are present in considerable strength, exponentially increasing their risk of being abducted, recruited and used, and subjected to sexual violence. In addition, they are more likely to be out of school and are often deprived of access to other basic rights, including medical care, creating pull factors for joining armed forces and armed groups. Experiencing physical and psychological traumas and a lack of access to services to fulfil their basic needs can have lasting consequences for them and their families.

Article 8 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child protects children's right to their identity, including their nationality, without unlawful interference: a precondition to fully enjoying other human rights. Critical to preventing childhood statelessness is the ability of all parents or primary caregivers to register the births of their children. Today, one in four children under the age of 5 is not registered at birth, according to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) data.³ Even when they are registered, proof of registration may be hard to verify. Worldwide, an estimated 237 million children under the age of 5 do not have a birth certificate. Experience also shows that, during emergencies, children may become separated or unaccompanied, without the resources, care or support that they need, and are at heightened risk of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Unaccompanied, separated and abandoned children often lack documentation proving their identity, creating a greater risk of statelessness and an inability to access basic services.

The situation of displaced children requires greater international attention and coordinated responses based firmly in international law. Neighbouring, transit and host countries should ensure that unaccompanied or separated children arriving in their territories are immediately identified and registered. In its resolution [2601 \(2021\)](#), the Security Council calls upon Member States to take necessary steps to provide assistance for the continuation of education for refugee and displaced children in realizing their right to education. The protection of schools during armed conflicts must be a priority. It is also crucial to find durable and just solutions for stateless children or children of foreign nationality who are stranded in conflict zones, regardless of their association with a party to the conflict. That includes facilitating children's safe access to schools, especially for girls, who continue to have less access to education than boys.⁴ Countries must also facilitate the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation of children, as well as respect the principle of non-refoulement, the best interests of the child and family unity.

Abduction of children and its differentiated impacts on girls and boys

In its resolution [2225 \(2015\)](#), the Security Council added abduction as a violation triggering the inclusion of parties in the annexes to the annual reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. Between 2005 and 2020, the United Nations verified⁵ 25,700 cases of abduction through its monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, the majority of which were perpetrated by non-State armed groups. In 2021, abductions increased by over 20 per cent compared with 2020, following a dramatic increase of 90 per cent between 2019 and 2020. Of particular concern was the increase in abductions of girls.

³ See www.unicef.org/press-releases/women-many-countries-face-discrimination-registering-births-warn-unhcr-and-unicef.

⁴ See www.unhcr.org/5f4f9a2b4.

⁵ See <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Study-on-the-evolution-of-the-Children-and-Armed-Conflict-mandate-1996-2021.pdf>.

Abductions are often linked to other grave violations, in particular to the recruitment and use of children and to the perpetration of sexual violence against children. In some situations, armed parties to conflict may also abduct children to punish or intimidate parents or communities or may target children suspected of involvement with opposing parties. Gender may also have an impact on the circumstances under which children are abducted, the additional violations experienced following abduction and the medium- and long-term consequences. As highlighted by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in its *Study on the Evolution of the Children and Armed Conflict Mandate 1996-2021*, published on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the mandate, boys account for three quarters of verified instances of abducted children, often associated with the recruitment and use of children. However, girls remain at a high risk of being abducted, including for the purposes of sexual violence, forced marriage and exploitation.

Furthermore, in its resolution [2331 \(2016\)](#), the Security Council underlined an emerging issue of cross-border abduction of children, in which girls are particularly vulnerable to trafficking.

Reintegration of children and peacebuilding

Children formerly associated with armed forces and groups should be treated primarily as victims of violations of international law. Their reintegration should be prioritized, and they should only be detained as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate time. However, once released, many of these children continue to face violence and socioeconomic exclusion, including through stigmatization and reprisals.

Reintegration is a long-term process requiring a long-term commitment. Nonetheless, reintegration programming continues to be limited to a short-term perspective, as State parties to conflict often lack the necessary resources to implement medium- to long-term reintegration strategies. In this context, it is imperative to ensure sustainable and comprehensive financing assistance for the reintegration of children so as to support peacebuilding planning and strategies, prevent re-recruitment, provide greater socioeconomic opportunities and break the cycle of violence.

In its resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#), the Security Council encourages Member States to focus on long-term and sustainable reintegration for children affected by armed conflict. It also recalls the importance of ensuring that children continue to have access to basic services during the conflict and post-conflict periods, including education and health care. In the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, ratified by more than 170 countries, it is also recognized that States parties shall cooperate in the reintegration of children who are victims of armed conflict. Furthermore, in the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), adopted 15 years ago and endorsed by more than 110 countries, it is stressed that funding should be available for the time required to ensure the full reintegration of children who have been associated with armed forces or armed groups.

Guiding questions

Protection of refugee, internally displaced and stateless children

- What can the Security Council do to prevent violations against displaced children in conflict situations and ensure their access to basic needs and services, regardless of their legal status?

- How can we better protect unaccompanied, separated and abandoned children and prevent statelessness in conflict situations?
- How can the greater protection of schools and the continuation of education for displaced children be ensured, in accordance with Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#) and [2601 \(2021\)](#)?

Abduction of children and its differentiated impact on girls and boys

- How can parties to conflict be prevented from using the abduction of children as a tactic to punish or intimidate families and communities? How can the root causes of abduction and the associated recruitment and use of children be addressed?
- What role could regional and subregional organizations play in tackling the cross-border abduction of children?
- How can the specific impact of abduction on girls, in particular those who are survivors of sexual violence, be better addressed, and the issue of stigmatization tackled?

Reintegration of children and peacebuilding

- What role could the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund play to ensure that peacebuilding planning and strategies effectively address the needs of children affected by conflict and post-conflict situations? How could better synergies be created between the Commission and the Fund, on the one hand, and the Office of the Special Representative and related partners, on the other?
- How can we enhance cooperation, including within the Security Council, to ensure long-term and sustainable financing support for the reintegration of children?
- How can we ensure that Member States, the United Nations, financial institutions, civil society and the private sector work together to mobilize the necessary resources for the reintegration of children?

Format, briefers and participation

The high-level open debate will be chaired by Ambassador Fernando Simas Magalhães, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil. The following speakers (to be confirmed) will brief the Security Council:

- The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba
- The Executive Director of UNICEF, Catherine Russell
- A civil society representative (to be confirmed)

Member States wishing to participate in person should add their names to the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires a.i. containing a request to participate in accordance with rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council must be uploaded to the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE.

In order to guarantee the participation of as many Member States as possible, statements should not exceed three minutes.