



## Security Council

Distr.: General  
23 June 2023

Original: English

---

### **Letter dated 23 June 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

In its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of July 2023, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland intends to organize an open debate on the theme “Children and armed conflict: how to prevent and respond to grave violations against children in armed conflict” to be held on Wednesday, 5 July 2023.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, the United Kingdom has prepared and attached a concept note (see annex).

Member States wishing to participate in person should inscribe their names on the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. The inscription for the list of speakers will open at 9.30 a.m. on the third working day preceding the date of the meeting (29 June). A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires a.i., requesting 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.

Delegates are invited to contact their Mission's access focal points to be granted access to the eSpeakers module on the e-deleGATE platform. For technical support related to user login and password, please contact the Office of Information and Communications Technology help desk at 212 963 3333 or by email at [missions-support@un.int](mailto:missions-support@un.int).

The list of speakers will be determined by the order in which requests are received. Delegations are kindly requested to limit their statements to no more than three minutes. The presidency would welcome the use of joint statements, where appropriate, as a means of improving focus and interactivity during the open debate.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Barbara Woodward



**Annex to the letter dated 23 June 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

**Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the theme “Children and armed conflict: how to prevent and respond to grave violations against children in armed conflict”, 5 July 2023, 10 a.m.**

During our Security Council presidency, the United Kingdom will organize an open debate on children and armed conflict on 5 July 2023.

As in previous years, the open debate will provide an opportunity for Member States to consider the findings from the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (to be issued as [A/77/895-S/2023/363](#)). Conflict continues to affect children to alarming levels, as outlined in the report. The open debate will allow Member States to express their continued commitment to ensuring that child protection, safety and well-being remain at the heart of the children and armed conflict agenda, delivering concrete results for children affected by conflict.

Member States are encouraged to focus their remarks on: (a) effective strategies and approaches in preventing and responding to grave violations against children; (b) how existing successful initiatives to protect children can be scaled up; (c) what innovative and new approaches can be piloted to better protect children in conflict; and (d) how to ensure age- and gender-sensitive, child-centred approaches.

**Background**

The 2022 report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict highlights the distressing reality faced by children in 24 country situations and one regional monitoring arrangement. With the inclusion of three new situations in 2022 – Ethiopia, Mozambique and Ukraine – the report demonstrates an alarming continued high level of grave violations compared with 2021. Killing and maiming of children remained the most significant verified violation in 2022, with more than 8,600 children affected. This was followed by the recruitment and use of children and the abduction of children, which increased by over 20 per cent. Attacks on schools and hospitals increased by over 100 per cent. Denial of humanitarian access remained very high but stable compared with 2021, and the number of incidents of sexual violence decreased by more than 10 per cent. However, sexual violence continued to be vastly underreported, owing to stigmatization, fear of reprisals, harmful social norms, the absence or lack of access to services, impunity, and safety concerns. Despite the dire situation for children living in armed conflict, progress on the protection of children was made through engagement with parties to the conflict in several contexts. This resulted, inter alia, in the release of more than 12,460 children from armed groups and armed forces in 2022.

*Utilizing existing tools available to the Security Council and the United Nations: monitoring and reporting mechanism and the Working Group*

Following robust engagement from the international community and the highest bodies of the United Nations, the children and armed conflict mandate has evolved in ways that allow the United Nations, in particular through the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and its partners, to better address the needs of children affected by war. In 2005, the Security Council, in its resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#), endorsed the monitoring and reporting

mechanism proposed by the Secretary-General to collect timely and reliable information on violations committed against children affected by armed conflict. The monitoring and reporting mechanism allows the United Nations to verify grave violations against children through a rigorous methodology, providing the basis for United Nations engagement with parties to the conflict, including parties listed in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General. The objective of this engagement is to develop commitments to end and prevent violations against children, pursuant to resolution [1460 \(2003\)](#). The monitoring and reporting mechanism remains time and cost-intensive. Continued engagement on child protection in situations of armed conflict requires strengthened child protection capabilities within United Nations missions and agencies.

New approaches, coupled with best practices, are needed to strengthen accountability for grave violations against children. Children are often marginalized within justice, accountability and reparations mechanisms despite the number of grave violations perpetrated against them and their unique vulnerability to conflict. These mechanisms must be strengthened and child-centred. Establishing age- and gender-sensitive approaches would facilitate children's access to justice. In addition, the enhanced monitoring of violations against children to understand the gendered impact of conflict in increasing their vulnerabilities is integral to the prevention of violations.

The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is also a critical accountability mechanism leading the international response to violations committed against children in conflict. By issuing concrete requests and encouraging parties to conflict to enter into concrete action plans to prevent grave violations from occurring, and reinforcing the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Working Group has the influence to change the behaviour of parties to conflict in order to ensure that children have the right to education and childhoods free from fear. A well-functioning Working Group is critical to the success of the children and armed conflict mandate and to ensuring accountability for those children affected by conflict by holding perpetrators to account.

#### *Preventing grave violations through international frameworks*

With a substantial increase in attacks on schools and hospitals and the recruitment and use of children and abductions, Member States are encouraged to renew their focus on preventing grave violations from occurring. There are a number of international frameworks to support them. International legal obligations and mechanisms, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Paris and the Vancouver Principles and the Safe Schools Declaration, are all powerful prevention tools in ensuring that children are better protected and not subjected to grave violations.

In addition to these key legal instruments, Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#) provides further scope to support the prevention of the six grave violations against children. This resolution provides the foundation for further United Nations action. Actions could include, inter alia, identifying tools to boost national, subregional and regional capacities on prevention; and mapping and addressing risks and vulnerabilities to children before, during and after conflict through a coordinated response across the United Nations system. Finally, the Special Representative's prevention plans and other commitments with parties to situations on the children and armed conflict agenda contribute to the prevention of grave violations.

*Providing support and reintegration to children affected by conflict*

The recruitment and use of children is an egregious violation of children's rights and continues to affect thousands of children every year. Conversely, it is important to ensure that children allegedly or actually associated with armed groups are not revictimized by armed forces that encounter them during operations. Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#) emphasizes the need to establish standard operating procedures for the rapid handover of these children to relevant civilian child protection actors. It also encourages Member States to focus on long-term and sustainable reintegration for children affected by armed conflict. The adoption of handover protocols is a critical tool to strengthen coordination and cooperation between military and civilian actors. Handover protocols also help to prioritize reintegration over the detention of children encountered during hostilities. Burkina Faso, Nigeria and the Philippines recently adopted handover protocols and have demonstrated their efficiency.

Member States will have a number of additional approaches to tackling grave violations and to better protecting children from the devastating effects of conflict. They are encouraged to share best practices and knowledge during the open debate. Children deserve a life free from fear and the horror of war.

**Guiding questions**

- What works to prevent and respond to grave violations against children in armed conflict?
- What more needs to be done to scale up existing successful initiatives?
- What innovative and new approaches can be piloted to better protect children in armed conflict?
- How can Member States ensure that protection and prevention approaches are age- and gender-sensitive and child-centred?

**Format, briefers and participation**

The open debate will be chaired by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward.

The following speakers will brief the Security Council:

- Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
- Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (to be confirmed)
- Civil society child briever

Member States wishing to participate in person should inscribe their names on the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. The inscription for the list of speakers will open at 9.30 a.m. on the third working day preceding the date of the meeting (29 June). A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires a.i., requesting 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.