



# Security Council

Distr.: General  
15 October 2020

Original: English

## Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

### Conclusions on children and armed conflict in the Sudan

1. During a closed videoconference meeting held on 27 July 2020, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict examined the sixth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan ([S/2020/614](#)), covering the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019, which was introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations also addressed the Working Group (see annex).
2. The members of the Working Group welcomed the report of the Secretary-General, in accordance with Security Council resolutions [1612 \(2005\)](#), [1882 \(2009\)](#), [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2068 \(2012\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#), [2225 \(2015\)](#) and [2427 \(2018\)](#), and took note of the analysis and recommendations contained therein.
3. The members of the Working Group welcomed the signature of the Constitutional Document in August 2019 to establish a new civilian-led transitional Government and transitional institutions, and the steps the country has undertaken to implement the action plan signed with the United Nations in March 2016, pertaining to ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children and which led to the delisting from the annexes to the report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict in 2018 ([A/72/865-S/2018/465](#)). The members of the Working Group expressed deep concern over the occurrence of the six grave violations against children in armed conflict in the Sudan, including the high prevalence of sexual violence and killing and maiming, which continue to be committed by all parties; they also expressed concern about the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the Sudan which negatively affects children; they underlined the importance of integrating child protection issues in the Sudan's peace processes and addressing impunity by ensuring that all perpetrators of violations and abuses are brought to justice and held accountable without undue delay, and called upon parties to the conflict to integrate child protection provisions into peace negotiations, where appropriate, including those relating to the release and reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups, as well as provisions on the rights and well-being of children.
4. Further to the meeting, and subject to and consistent with applicable international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions [1612 \(2005\)](#), [1882 \(2009\)](#), [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2068 \(2012\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#), [2225 \(2015\)](#) and [2427 \(2018\)](#), the Working Group agreed to the direct action set out below.



### **Public statement by the Chair of the Working Group**

5. The Working Group agreed to address a message, through a public statement by its Chair, to the following:

#### *All parties to the armed conflict in the Sudan*

(a) Strongly condemning all violations and abuses committed against children in the Sudan, and urging all parties to the armed conflict to immediately end and prevent all violations of applicable international law involving the recruitment and use of children, abduction, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access and to comply with their obligations under international law;

(b) Calling upon all parties to further implement all previous conclusions of the Working Group with regard to the Sudan ([S/AC.51/2007](#), [S/AC.51/2008/7](#), [S/AC.51/2009/5](#), [S/AC.51/2012/1](#) and [S/AC.51/2017/3](#));

(c) Welcoming the signing of the Constitutional Document on 17 August 2019 on the establishment of a new civilian-led transitional Government and transitional institutions, further welcoming the steps taken to date to implement the Constitutional Document and calling upon all stakeholders to remain committed to the transition in order for the aspirations of the Sudanese people for a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous future to be realized, reaffirming its readiness to support the Sudan in this regard and commending the vital role played by the African Union in supporting the Sudan in its transition to democracy and good governance;

(d) Welcoming the commitment in the Constitutional Document to achieve a fair and comprehensive peace in the Sudan by addressing the root causes and the impact of conflict, welcoming the peace agreement between the Government and the Sudanese Revolutionary Front, signed on 3 October 2020, as an important step towards sustainable peace and stability, noting with appreciation the role of the Government of South Sudan in supporting these negotiations, urging the parties to the conflict to continue to engage constructively to implement the peace agreement, and further urging those who have not yet engaged in peace negotiations to do so immediately, without preconditions;

(e) Calling upon all parties to the peace process to ensure that the rights and needs of conflict-affected children are taken into account in the implementation of the peace agreement and during talks for any future peace agreements, including provisions on the release, and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups, as well as provisions on the rights and well-being of children, and that these be integrated into peace negotiations and ceasefire and peace agreements and in provisions for ceasefire monitoring, taking into account children's views in those processes, where possible, including by building on the Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict;

(f) Noting with concern that access to conflict-affected areas of Darfur, as well as in Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile, was restricted during the reporting period, which presented challenges to the verification of the six grave violations against children and that the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Sudan ([S/2020/614](#)) does not reflect the full impact of armed conflict on children in the Sudan, while noting improved access since late 2019 and calling upon all relevant parties, including the Government and armed groups to guarantee access;

(g) Stressing the importance of accountability for all violations and abuses against children in armed conflict, and calling upon the Government to continue its

efforts to address impunity by ensuring that all perpetrators of violations and abuses are brought to justice and held accountable without undue delay, including through timely and systematic investigation and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction, and to ensure that all victims have access to justice and to provide remedies to those victims, including the medical and psychosocial support services that they need;

(h) Strongly urging all parties to immediately release, without preconditions, all children from their ranks, hand them over to relevant civilian child protection actors, and end and prevent further recruitment and use of children, in line with their obligations as set out in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and noting the efforts of the Government in this regard;

(i) Expressing concern about the deprivation of liberty of children for their association or alleged association with armed groups, and urging all parties to the conflict to consider children associated with armed groups, including those who may have committed crimes, primarily as victims of recruitment and use, to work to ensure their full reintegration through family- and community-based reintegration programmes, including access to health care, psychosocial support and education programmes, guided by the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), as well as raising awareness and working with communities to avoid stigmatization of those children and facilitate their return, and to ensure that, where children face prosecution for allegedly committing crimes, those prosecutions are carried out with respect for the rights of the child;

(j) Expressing deep concern at the high number of children killed or maimed as a direct or indirect result of hostilities between parties to the armed conflict during the reporting period, including as a result of gunfire, explosive remnants of war, attacks with high calibre weapons, aerial bombardment and physical assault, and calling upon all parties to the armed conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law;

(k) Expressing grave concern at the high number of cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children, recognizing the underreporting of sexual violence against children in Darfur, among others, due to impunity, stigma and discrimination, urging all parties to the armed conflict to take immediate and specific measures to put an end to and prevent the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children by members of their respective forces, stressing the importance of accountability for those responsible for sexual and gender-based violence against children, and of providing non-discriminatory and comprehensive specialized services, including psychosocial, health, legal and livelihood support and services, to survivors of sexual violence, and welcoming in this regard the recent signing of the Framework of Cooperation of the Sudan and the United Nations on the Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence in Conflict;

(l) Strongly condemning attacks on schools and hospitals in violation of international law, calling upon all parties to the armed conflict to comply with applicable international law and to respect the civilian character of schools and hospitals, including their personnel, as such, and to end and prevent attacks or threats of attacks against those institutions and their personnel, as well as the military use of schools and hospitals in violation of applicable international law, and in that regard recalling the Safe Schools Declaration, endorsed by the Sudan in December 2015; noting further the effect that attacks on schools and their use can have on the enjoyment of the right to education;

(m) Strongly condemning the abduction of children; urging all parties to the armed conflict to cease the abduction of children and all violations and abuses

committed against abducted children and to immediately release from captivity abducted children and hand them over to relevant civilian child protection actors;

(n) Strongly condemning all incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including attacks on humanitarian personnel and looting of humanitarian goods; expressing serious concern that access by the United Nations and other humanitarian actors to vulnerable populations, including children, was restricted during the reporting period by all parties, including by the Government, and that children living in conflict-affected areas were deprived of basic humanitarian assistance, while noting improved access since late 2019 and calling upon all parties to the armed conflict to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access to children, respect the exclusively humanitarian nature and impartiality of humanitarian aid and respect the work of all United Nations humanitarian agencies and their humanitarian partners, without distinction, and strongly condemns the unlawful denial of humanitarian access and depriving civilians, particularly children, of objects indispensable to their survival, including wilfully impeding relief supplies;

(o) Recalling that the Security Council, by its resolution [2340 \(2017\)](#), recalled the obligations of all States to comply with the arms embargo in accordance with resolution [1591 \(2005\)](#) and to implement the travel ban and asset freeze imposed under that resolution, which apply to individuals and entities designated pursuant to the listing criteria set out in paragraph 3 (c) of resolution [1591 \(2005\)](#);

(p) Expressing the readiness of the Working Group to communicate to the Security Council and to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1591 \(2005\)](#) concerning the Sudan pertinent information with a view to assisting them in the imposition of sanctions on perpetrators;

*To all armed groups operating in the Sudan, in particular the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM/N), the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General*

(q) Expressing grave concern at, and its strongest condemnation of, the six grave violations that continue to be committed against children in the Sudan, and urging the armed groups to immediately end and prevent all violations of applicable international law involving the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access and to comply with their obligations under international law;

(r) Expressing deep concern and its condemnation of the continued and high level of recruitment and use of children, urging all armed groups to end and prevent further recruitment and use of children under 18 years of age and immediately release all children present in their ranks, and welcoming the efforts made in the framework of the action plans with some armed groups in this regard;

(s) Strongly condemning the incidents of denial of humanitarian access, and calling upon all armed groups to immediately allow and facilitate full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, consistent with the United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, including humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and the relevant provisions of international law and international humanitarian law, to respect the exclusively humanitarian nature and impartiality of humanitarian aid and to respect the work of all United Nations agencies, and their humanitarian partners, without adverse distinction;

(t) Calling upon the armed groups listed in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict ([A/74/845-S/2020/525](#)) who have

existing action plans with the United Nations to cooperate with the country task force on the swift and full implementation of their action plans on recruitment and use to ensure the identification, release and reintegration of children associated with armed groups;

(u) Urging the SLA/AW to engage with the United Nations on the development of an action plan;

(v) Welcoming the road map for the expedited implementation of the SPLM/N Al-Hilu faction action plan, developed with the country task force, and calling for its swift implementation;

(w) Urging the SLA/MM and JEM to engage with the United Nations on the implementation of their action plans;

*To the Government of the Sudan*

(x) Welcoming the efforts made by the Government of the Sudan since the last conclusions of the Working Group, including by the Sudanese Armed Forces, in taking all steps in its action plan pertaining to ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children, which, in 2018, led to their delisting from the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict ([A/72/865-S/2018/465](#)), and calling upon the Government to continue to build on this progress including through the establishment of clear procedures for the identification and screening of children in all of their forces, the endorsement of handover protocols, the implementation of complaint procedures and awareness-raising activities;

(y) Encouraging the Government of the Sudan to take measures to put an end to continued violations committed against children, including by members of its security forces and the Rapid Support Forces, and noting in this regard the command orders issued by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces prohibiting the recruitment of children;

(z) Expressing concern about the deprivation of liberty of children for their association or alleged association with armed groups, and urging the Government to treat children associated with armed groups, including those who may have committed crimes, primarily as victims of recruitment and use, to comply with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular the obligation that the arrest, detention and imprisonment of children should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time and that, in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration, and urging it to prioritize their reintegration, through family- and community-based programmes, including access to health care, psychosocial support and education programmes, as guided by the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), which it has endorsed, as well as raising awareness and working with communities to avoid stigmatization of those children and facilitate their return, and to ensure that, where children face prosecution for allegedly committing crimes, those prosecutions are carried out with respect for the rights of the child;

(aa) Welcoming the Government's decision to maintain the institutional structures and mandates of the national and state-level technical committees, the agreement on a road map to ensure the continued compliance with the action plan, the development and drafting of a national strategy on the protection of children in armed conflict, the development of communication and awareness-raising materials to launch the national communications campaign and the drafting of a standardized training manual on child protection for government security forces, and noting the role of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan

(UNITAMS) with regard to supporting the Government with the development and implementation of action plans and a national prevention plan on violations and abuses against children;

(bb) Encouraging the Government to sustain the gains of the completed action plan through the swift implementation of the road map developed with the United Nations to ensure the continued compliance with the action plan and through the elaboration and implementation of a national prevention plan on grave violations against children;

(cc) Welcoming the Government's agreement to permit humanitarian access to all areas of the country, including the conflict-affected areas of Jebel Marra, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, which has allowed the United Nations to access parts of these areas for the first time since September 2011, creating renewed opportunity to engage with armed groups on the situation of children affected by the conflict, and calling upon the Government to continue in this regard;

(dd) Urging the Government to undertake further efforts towards ensuring accountability for the six grave violations against children by bringing those responsible to justice and providing remedies to victims;

(ee) Welcoming the commitments made by the Government in the Framework of Cooperation of the Sudan and the United Nations on the Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence in Conflict, and calling for its full implementation;

(ff) Urging the Government to take measures to prevent the killing or maiming of children by Government security forces in all circumstances related to armed conflict.

6. The Working Group agreed to address a message, through a public statement by the Chair of the Working Group, to community and religious leaders:

(a) Emphasizing the important role of community and religious leaders in strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict;

(b) Urging them to strengthen community-level protection and to condemn publicly and continue to advocate the ending and prevention of violations and abuses against children, notably the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks and threats of attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions and denial of humanitarian access, and to engage with the Government, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders to support the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict in their communities, including by raising awareness to avoid stigmatization of those children.

### **Recommendations to the Security Council**

7. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter addressed to the Government of the Sudan:

(a) Stressing the primary role of the Government in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict in the Sudan, and recognizing the importance of strengthening national capacities in that regard;

(b) Welcoming the signing of the Constitutional Document on 17 August 2019 on the establishment of a new civilian-led transitional Government and transitional institutions, further welcoming the steps taken to date to implement the Constitutional Document and calling upon all stakeholders to remain committed to the transition in order for the aspirations of the Sudanese people for a peaceful, stable, democratic, and prosperous future to be realized, reaffirming its readiness to support the Sudan in

this regard and commending the vital role played by the African Union in supporting the Sudan in its transition to democracy and good governance;

(c) Welcoming the commitment in the Constitutional Document to achieve a fair and comprehensive peace in the Sudan by addressing the root causes and the impact of conflict, welcoming the peace agreement between the Government and the Sudanese Revolutionary Front, signed on 3 October 2020, as an important step towards sustainable peace and stability, noting with appreciation the role of the Government of South Sudan in supporting these negotiations, urging the parties to the conflict to continue to engage constructively to implement the peace agreement, and further urging those who have not yet engaged in peace negotiations to do so immediately, without preconditions;

(d) Calling upon the Government to ensure that the rights and needs of conflict-affected children are taken into account in the implementation of the peace agreement and during talks for any future peace agreements, including provisions on the release, and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups, as well as provisions on the rights and well-being of children, and that these be integrated into peace negotiations and ceasefire and peace agreements and in provisions for ceasefire monitoring, where appropriate, and taking into account children's views in those processes, where possible, while recalling the existence of the Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict;

(e) Welcoming the efforts made by the Government of the Sudan since the last conclusions of the Working Group, including by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), in taking all steps in its action plan pertaining to ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children, which led to the delisting, in 2018, from the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict ([A/72/865-S/2018/465](#)), and calling upon the Government to continue to build on this progress including through the establishment of clear procedures for the identification and screening of children in all of their forces, the endorsement of handover protocols, the implementation of complaint procedures and awareness-raising activities;

(f) Encouraging the Government of the Sudan to take measures to put an end to continued violations committed against children, including those involving killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, abduction of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access, including by members of its security forces and the Rapid Support Forces, and noting in this regard the command orders issued by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces prohibiting the recruitment of children;

(g) Calling upon the Government to take measures to prevent killing and maiming of children by Government security forces in all circumstances related to armed conflict, in line with its obligations under international law; calling upon the Government to take measures to ensure and demonstrate that recruitment of children by all government forces has ceased;

(h) Calling upon the Government to take immediate and specific measures to put an end to and prevent the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children by members of its security forces, stressing the importance of accountability for all those responsible for sexual and gender-based violence against children, and of providing non-discriminatory and comprehensive specialized services, including psychosocial, health, legal and livelihood support and services, to survivors of sexual violence, and welcoming in this regard the recent signing of the Framework of Cooperation of the Sudan and the United Nations on the Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence in Conflict;

(i) Strongly condemning attacks on schools and hospitals in violation of international law, calling upon the Government to comply with applicable international law and to respect the civilian character of schools and hospitals, including their personnel, as such, and to end and prevent attacks or threats of attacks against those institutions and their personnel, as well as the military use of schools and hospitals, in violation of applicable international law, and in that regard recalling the Safe Schools Declaration, endorsed by the Sudan in December 2015;

(j) Strongly condemning the abduction of children by the Sudan security forces during the reporting period, urging the Government to end and prevent the abduction of children, to immediately release from captivity abducted children and hand them over to relevant civilian child protection actors;

(k) Welcoming the Government's decision to maintain the institutional structures and mandates of the national and state-level technical committees, the agreement on a road map to ensure the continued compliance with the action plan, the development and drafting of a national strategy on the protection of children affected by armed conflict, the development of communication and awareness-raising materials to launch the national communications campaign and the drafting of a standardized training manual on child protection for government security forces, and noting the role of UNITAMS with regard to supporting the Government with the development and implementation of action plans and a national prevention plan on violations and abuses against children;

(l) Encouraging the Government to sustain the gains of the completed action plan through the swift implementation of the road map developed with the United Nations to ensure the continued compliance with the action plan and through the elaboration and implementation of a national prevention plan on the six grave violations against children;

(m) Welcoming the Government's agreement to permit humanitarian access to all areas of the country, including conflict-affected areas of Jebel Marra, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, which has allowed the United Nations to access parts of those areas for the first time since September 2011, creating renewed opportunity to engage with armed groups on the situation of children affected by the conflict, and calling upon the Government to continue in this regard;

(n) Urging the Government to undertake further efforts towards ensuring accountability for the six grave violations against children by bringing those responsible to justice and providing remedies to victims;

(o) Welcoming the commitments made by the Government by signing the framework of cooperation with the United Nations, related to the prevention of and response to rape and other forms of sexual violence, and calling for its full implementation;

(p) Inviting the Government to keep the Working Group informed of its efforts to implement the recommendations of the Working Group and the Secretary-General, as appropriate.

8. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter addressed to the Secretary-General:

(a) Requesting him to ensure the continued effectiveness of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict in the Sudan and of the child protection component of African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS), including by allocating sufficient dedicated child protection capacity to the component;



(b) Also requesting him to encourage the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting and other relevant United Nations entities to continue their engagement and efforts to support the Government in addressing violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict, including through the protection of children, the reintegration of children affected by the conflict, the monitoring and reporting on the situation of children affected by conflict, the monitoring and implementation of action plans with armed groups and the conclusion of new action plans with armed groups;

(c) Encouraging the Secretary-General, including through his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, to broadly disseminate the Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict to the relevant actors involved in the peace and mediation processes in the Sudan, to ensure that the protection, rights, well-being and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict are fully incorporated and prioritized in all post-conflict recovery and reconstruction planning, programmes and strategies as well as in efforts on peacebuilding and sustaining peace and encourage and facilitate consideration of the views of children in the processes in the Sudan.

9. The Working Group agreed to recommend the following to the Security Council:

(a) Recommending that the Security Council continue to take into due consideration the situation of children and armed conflict in the Sudan, in particular when reviewing the mandates of UNAMID, UNISFA, UNITAMS, and their activities;

(b) Encouraging the Security Council to ensure the continuation of, and support for, the implementation of a child protection mandate for UNITAMS, especially with regard to monitoring, reporting, training and mainstreaming, as well as dialogue with parties to the armed conflict on action plans and support in their implementation, and stressing the need for adequate capacity in this regard.

10. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter to the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1591 \(2005\)](#) concerning the Sudan:

(a) Recalling paragraph 7 (b) of Security Council resolution [1882 \(2009\)](#), by which the Council requested enhanced communication between the Working Group and relevant Security Council sanctions committees, including through the exchange of pertinent information on violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict;

(b) Encouraging the continued sharing of relevant information by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict with the Committee and the Working Group;

(c) Encouraging the Committee to continue to consider the designation for sanctions of individuals and entities, in accordance with the rules and guidelines of the Committee.

#### **Direct action by the Working Group**

11. The Working Group agreed to send letters from the Chair of the Working Group to the World Bank and other donors as follows:

(a) Stressing that the best way to protect children is through peace, and urging donors to continue to provide political and financial support to Sudanese peacebuilding initiatives and to the implementation of the peace process;

(b) Calling upon donors to provide support to programmes and initiatives aimed at protecting children in the context of the armed conflict in the Sudan,

including reintegration, strengthening of the national legal and judicial mechanisms, in particular with regards to addressing impunity for violations and abuses against children in armed conflict, ensuring timely and appropriate care and support for child victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence and bolstering development of national education and health systems, as well as finding durable solutions for internally displaced children;

(c) Also calling upon donors to support the child protection efforts and initiatives of United Nations agencies and other relevant organizations in the field relating to strengthening national capacity-building and pertinent national institutions and their programmes and reintegration programming for children, and highlighting that the reintegration of such children must be in line with international law, including the best interests of the child;

(d) Inviting donors to support the humanitarian effort in the Sudan, including with regards to tackling the rapidly deteriorating food security situation and the risk of acute malnutrition, especially among vulnerable children;

(e) Urging donors to continue their engagement and support for the economy of the Sudan following the pledges made at the Sudan Partnership Conference, held in Berlin on 25 June 2020, including through support for the most vulnerable and the creation of jobs and the development of livelihood options;

(f) Inviting donors to keep the Working Group informed on their funding and assistance efforts, as appropriate.

---

**Annex****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict**

I wish to begin by thanking the Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Marc Pecsteen, for convening this meeting. I would also like to take this opportunity to bid him farewell as he prepares to leave us soon, wishing him success and good luck in all his future endeavours.

I would also like to thank Belgium for the remarkable efforts and ongoing support to the mandate of the Working Group in spite of the tremendous challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

I also extend my appreciation and gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, for her leadership, dedication and advocacy for child protection, and specifically her sincere efforts in the formation of the global coalition for reintegration of child soldiers launched in 2018, and the Act to Protect Children Affected by Armed Conflict campaign launched in 2019.

It will be a remiss from my side if I don't express our appreciation to the efforts of the country task force and its cooperation with the Sudanese authorities in training commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the Sudanese armed forces, police and civil society organizations on child protection. It is our hope that the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS), which will commence its mandate early next year will continue assisting the Sudanese authorities in capacity-building regarding child protection, mine action and clearance of the explosive remnants of war.

This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the establishment of the Working Group established by Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and the monitoring and reporting mechanism, and child protection has become even more relevant with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This calls for increased engagement and commitment by the Security Council towards achieving peace in conflict affected areas, and for continued promotion of child protection capacity by all United Nations missions and operations. The COVID-19 pandemic has embarked the world into a deep health crisis and socioeconomic hardship. The suffering of children in internally displaced persons camps and refugee camps in all conflict areas worldwide remain persistent following the disruption in the provision of basic services, such as: education, nutrition, health, sanitation and clean water, vaccination and the reintegration of child victims back to their communities, all owing to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown measures.

Since the issuance of the previous report on Children in Armed Conflict in the Sudan in March 2017, my country has undergone a huge transformation and enormous social, political and legal changes, resulting in milestone achievements for child protection and rights. I personally, on behalf of my Government, welcome this opportunity to highlight key developments and priorities which have guided specific actions that culminated into significant progress during the reporting period. These developments are presented below.

First, the completion and implementation of the national action plan within a two-year time frame (from March 2016 to June 2018), resulted in the delisting of the Sudanese Armed Forces from the list included in the report by the Secretary-General of parties that recruit and use children in armed conflict.

A final report on the full implementation of the national action plan was presented to the high-level and technical coordination committees in the presence of United Nations officials in Khartoum shortly after the announcement of the delisting.

During the implementation of the national action plan, Ms. Gamba visited the Republic of the Sudan, and so did the members of the Working Group which had the chance to see progress on the ground. Those visits assisted in sustaining the momentum of strengthening the protection of children in conflict affected areas in the Sudan.

In 2019, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces continued issuing and disseminating command orders prohibiting the recruitment and use of children into their ranks and establishing procedures for identification and screening. Regarding attacks on schools and hospitals, it's worth mentioning that the Sudan endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and during the reporting period no attacks on schools or hospitals were reported.

A national communication campaign was carried out in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund to end and prevent child recruitment. Complaint procedures were also adopted to enable public reporting on violations of security forces and armed groups, as well as awareness-raising activities. Several workshops were also been convened in Darfur regarding the standard operating procedures for age estimation in order to prevent any child recruitment.

The Sudan reiterates its full commitment to continue these efforts, specifically the training of all integrated military forces on the standard operating procedures on the release and handing over of child soldiers with the view to ensuring their full reintegration in their communities.

Second, the unilateral ceasefires declared by the Government and some armed groups remained in effect throughout the reporting period, resulting in a considerable reduction of hostilities and reflected in the rulings of the Security Council regarding the overall improvement in the security situation in Darfur, leading to a reduction of the UNAMID footprint according to Security Council resolution [2363 \(2017\)](#).

Third, pertaining to intercommunal clashes and conflicts over access to land and natural resources, the Government carried out several campaigns for the collection of small and light weapons during the reporting period to decrease incidents of violence, and also established mediation teams and traditional conflict prevention mechanisms to solve communal conflicts and this remains active to prevent escalation. Another campaign for arms collection will start soon.

Fourth, for the transitional Government peace remains the ultimate objective and the only way to ensure the protection of children in Darfur and the two areas, and in the meantime peace dialogues continues with various armed groups under the umbrella of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) in Juba. These talks led to the signing of the Juba Declaration for Confidence-building Procedures in September 2019, which constituted the road map to a possible agreement that could be endorsed by the parties in the coming weeks. Moreover, children's rights have been highly projected in these talks, with the Constitutional Declaration fully committed to that end.

Fifth, during the reporting period there were no specific incidents of denials for humanitarian access. In the aftermath of the revolution in 2019, the transitional Government lifted all restrictions in areas controlled by armed groups, including in Jebel Marra (SLM/AW), Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan (SPLM/N). This allowed the United Nations to access those areas for the first time in many years, creating opportunities to engage with armed groups for the benefit of child protection.

New guidelines were also issued by the Sudanese Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in the aftermath of the revolution, with the aim of removing any restrictions on humanitarian work in the Sudan, to reach the most vulnerable children in remote and conflict-affected areas by national and international actors.

Sixth, the transitional Government signed a framework of cooperation on the prevention and response to sexual violence in conflict with the office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, in March 2020. This will undoubtedly help to improve the national capacity and to take measures to prevent and end sexual violence in conflict-affected areas, and support to victims and justice by holding perpetrators accountable.

The transitional Government has also recently announced a number of legal reforms introduced by the Ministry of Justice, including the criminalization of female genital mutilation and the adoption of a national action plan on women and peace and security.

Finally, the Sudan fully supports the mandate of the Working Group and its efforts to improve the situation of Children in the Sudan. The Sudan also commends Special Representative Gamba for her sustained efforts to develop a national prevention plan to safeguard protection of children. We shall remain strongly committed to cooperate with her along these lines, especially on the regional level to end cross border violations and trafficking of children for recruitment purposes in neighbouring countries.

The Sudan reaffirms its full commitment to the Security Council resolutions on children in armed conflict, and calls upon members of the Working Group to encourage international financial institutions to support the long-term reintegration of child soldiers, strengthening the capacity of national authorities in the field of rule of law, ensuring socioeconomic development in conflicted-affected areas, and scaling up of coordination between the Government and the monitoring and verification team for real time and accurate statistics on grave violations against children.

---