

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 30 July 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of the Republic of Poland, the Security Council is scheduled to hold a ministerial open debate on the subject “Children and armed conflict” on Friday, 2 August 2019. To help guide the discussion during the said event, Poland has prepared the attached concept note (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and the annex thereto could be circulated as a document of the Security Council in connection with the item entitled “Children and armed conflict”.

(Signed) Joanna **Wronecka**
Ambassador



Annex to the letter dated 30 July 2019 from the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the open debate on children and armed conflict to be held on 2 August 2019

During its presidency of the Security Council, Poland will organize an open debate on children and armed conflict on 2 August 2019. The debate will focus on the findings of the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2019/509), which outlines the impact of war on girls and boys during 2018.

Background

The report of the Secretary-General outlines the many ways in which children suffered in 2018 owing to conflict, with a focus on the six grave violations, namely recruitment and use, killing and maiming, abductions, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access. The report highlights the fact that more than 24,000 violations were verified by the United Nations across 20 country situations.

August 2019 marks the 10-year anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), which added an additional emphasis to the children and armed conflict agenda regarding the violations of killing and maiming and sexual violence. In that resolution, the Council noted its concern about the considerable number of child casualties resulting from killing and maiming in armed conflicts, including as a result of indiscriminate and excessive use of force, indiscriminate use of landmines, unexploded ordnance, explosive remnants of war and other weapons and use of children as human shields.

The report of the Secretary-General covering 2018 highlights that once again children represented an alarming percentage and overall number of the casualties of war. In 2018, the monitoring and reporting Mechanism, established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), verified more than 12,000 cases of killing and maiming – the highest number yet. These figures show how the evolving nature of conflict is putting children, their homes and their schools in the front line in new and terrible ways.

Intra-State conflict is increasing, as is the number of armed actors involved, complicating protection efforts and the attribution of violations. Wars are lasting longer, and there are a number of protracted conflicts around the world. They are more likely to be fought in urban areas among civilian populations, leading to deaths and an increase in the number of boys and girls suffering long-term disabilities in conflict and post-conflict settings. In its recently adopted resolution 2475 (2019) on persons with disabilities the Security Council stressed the specific needs of children with disabilities in armed conflict, and encouraged Member States to ensure that children have equal access to basic services and to humanitarian assistance. Urban warfare is also impacting the civilian infrastructure needed to guarantee children's access to food and humanitarian assistance, as noted in Council resolution 2417 (2018). In addition, attacks on schools and hospitals continue to have a serious impact on children's rights to education and health, as highlighted in resolution 1998 (2011).

On this 10-year anniversary of resolution 1882 (2009), we also recall the Council's concern about rape and other forms of sexual violence committed against girls and boys in the context of armed conflict, including the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war. Despite the significant challenges in verifying this violation,

including challenges due to the associated stigma and lack of resources, in 2018, there were nearly 1,000 verified cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence outlined in the Secretary-General's report. Security Council resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#) provides new emphasis on sexual violence in conflict and avenues for stopping this egregious violation, through specific operative paragraphs applicable to the children and armed conflict agenda, which require reflection and implementation to improve protection for boys and girls.

The way forward, prevention, reintegration and stopping the cycles of violence

Despite the worrisome levels of violations against children, 2018 also witnessed important steps to improve the situation of children affected by conflict. United Nations staff and civil society partners worked tirelessly through mediation and peace efforts, as well as bilateral interactions with parties to conflict, for the release and reintegration of 13,600 children worldwide. They also engaged with parties to conflict to secure commitments and sign action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children. This progress serves to highlight the vital importance of protection, prevention, peacebuilding and development in ending cycles of violence against children. It also underscores the important work of child protection actors on the ground to end and prevent violations.

Dedicated child protection advisers play a critical role in operationalizing the United Nations children and armed conflict agenda by monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children, engaging with parties to conflict in complex and fluid environments, operationalizing action plans to end and prevent violations, and mainstreaming child protection across United Nations peace operations. Ensuring that child protection actors have the political space to engage with parties to conflict on the prevention of violations is a vital element of sustainable peace moving forward. Moreover, ensuring that United Nations peace operations have the necessary human, financial and technical resources is essential to effectively protect children affected by armed conflict.

The open debate will aim to shine a light on the work of these front-line staff and discuss ways in which the international community and the Security Council can better support child protection actors in the field.

The open debate will also provide an opportunity for Member States to engage on how to improve efforts to support child victims and survivors of the six grave violations, including but not limited to the launch of the Global Coalition for the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers.

In its resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#) the Security Council emphasized the vital role of regional and subregional organizations in protecting children in armed conflict and preventing grave violations. Member States are invited to reflect on how they can strengthen support and collaboration between the United Nations and regional and subregional prevention efforts through the prism of the children and armed conflict agenda.

In 2019, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General launched the ACT to Protect campaign, with the co-sponsorship of the African Union and European Union. The campaign aims to translate existing commitments to protect children in situations of conflict into tangible actions to protect and promote children's rights, including justice and accountability, adherence to international laws and norms for the protection of children in war, and sustainable and gender-sensitive programmes to support affected children.

Issues for consideration

What progress has been achieved, and what new challenges have emerged in the United Nations work to prevent the killing and maiming of children, in particular since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009)? How can the provisions contained in resolution 2427 (2018) be utilized to reduce and prevent this violation? How can efforts be enhanced to reduce the impact of explosive weapons on children?

What can be done to combat sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict? How can resolutions 2427 (2018) and 2467 (2019) be better used to prevent rape and other forms of sexual violence against children?

How can Member States better protect and support children with disabilities during and after conflict?

How can Member States strengthen the engagement of regional and subregional actors on child protection and the prevention of grave violations?

How can Member States better support action by the United Nations and other child protection actors to promote children's rights in conflict, including efforts such as the ACT to Protect campaign, and engagement with parties to conflict on action plans?

Format and participants

The open debate will take place on Friday, 2 August at 10 a.m. in the Security Council Chamber. The debate will be chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland, Jacek Czaputowicz.

Considering the large number of Member States expected to participate in the open debate, all speakers are requested to limit their interventions in the Chamber to three minutes. Member States will be able to upload a longer version of their statement for the record. Member States are also encouraged to speak in regional groups.

A summary of the meeting is to be circulated as a document of the Security Council and the General Assembly with a view to facilitating the Council's possible follow-up on specific practical proposals put forward during the debate.

The following speakers will brief the Security Council

Ms. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Ms. Mariatu Kamara, UNICEF Canada Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict and founder of the Mariatu Foundation

Mr. Majok Peter Awan, former child soldier and current child protection professional