

## 26. Children and armed conflict

During the period under review, the Security Council held one open debate in connection with the item entitled “Children and armed conflict”.<sup>1004</sup> More information on the meeting, including on participants and speakers, is provided in table 1 below.<sup>1005</sup>

The open debate was held on 19 July at the initiative of Brazil, which held the Presidency for the month,<sup>1006</sup> and further to the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.<sup>1007</sup> The open debate was chaired by the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil and featured briefings from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Founder and Executive Director of the non-governmental organization Similar Ground.<sup>1008</sup>

In her remarks, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict noted that the abuses that children were subjected to the previous year were as grievous as they were many. In 2021, she reported that 23,982 verified cases of grave violations were committed against over 19,165 children in the 21 conflict country situations and one regional monitoring arrangement covered by her mandate. She added that during 2021, 8,000 children were either killed or maimed, making these the most prevalent of all grave violations. The recruitment and use of children for, in and by parties to armed conflict, with more than 6,300 verified as recruited and used, was the second most prevalent violation, followed by the denial of humanitarian access to children, with more than 3,900 incidents. The Special Representative expressed concern over the increase of abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence as well as the steady increase in violations against girls, especially through killing and maiming and sexual violence and abduction. She also noted a general rise in attacks on schools and hospitals and a verified increase in the military use of schools. She added that the Secretary-General had

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<sup>1004</sup> [S/PV.9096](#) and [S/PV.9096 \(Resumption 1\)](#). For more information on the format of meetings, see part II.

<sup>1005</sup> See [A/77/2](#), part II, chap. 14.

<sup>1006</sup> A concept note was circulated by a letter dated 5 July 2022 ([S/2022/540](#)).

<sup>1007</sup> See [S/2022/493](#).

<sup>1008</sup> See [S/PV.9096](#) and [S/PV.9096 \(Resumption 1\)](#). For further information on high-level meetings, see part II.

included the situations of Ethiopia, Mozambique and Ukraine on the agenda on children and armed conflict due to the severity of the armed violence, conflict and war in those places and would commence monitoring to report on those situations by 2023. On the positive developments, she highlighted the implementation of 17 joint action plans with parties to conflict, and 40 new commitments and agreed measures put in place as well as the release from armed groups and forces of over 12,200 children from armed groups and forces during 2021 in the wake of the advocacy of the United Nations. In addition, progress had been made in analysis, policy development and partnerships as well as on prevention mechanisms as provided for in resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#), including the launching of a guidance note on the violation of abduction, the publishing of studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on grave violations against children in armed conflict, as well as a report consolidating the results of the four regional consultations. In conclusion, the Special Representative highlighted three of the recommendations outlined in the report of the Secretary-General. First, the need for United Nations operations on the ground to be adequately mandated, staffed and funded to continue carrying out their mandate in relation to the protection of children. Secondly, safeguarding humanitarian spaces and ensuring safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to all children. Third, ensuring sustainable financial support and technical assistance for timely, gender-, age- and disability-sensitive, survivor-centered and inclusive reintegration programs for children, critical for breaking cycles of violence and allowing child survivors a second chance at a constructive life. In concluding, she stressed that the best way to protect children and prevent violations against them in situations of armed conflict was to promote and champion peace.

While lamenting the continued proliferation of conflicts and grave violations against children, as well as the addition of three new situations to the report of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UNICEF underscored the progress made, in particular, the removal of eight situations from the report, and the release of over 10,000 children from armed forces and groups, bringing the total release number to more than 186,000 since 2000. She expressed continued commitment on the part of the United Nations to protecting children in accordance with the humanitarian principles, while underlining that Member States had enormous power to drive progress to protect children. She called on Member States not only to insist on compliance

with international humanitarian law but to go beyond that and use their power to issue military orders with zero-tolerance policies on grave violations against children, to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration, to use their influence to push States and non-State armed groups to prevent and end grave violations against children, to protect children surviving grave violations from stigma and revictimization, and to support the United Nations efforts through the allocation of resources and their commitment to supporting the agenda.

During his briefing, Mr. Patrik Kumi, the Founder and Executive Director of the non-governmental organization Similar Ground shared with the Council his personal experience first growing up forced to become a child soldier, escaping then to Uganda to become a refugee, joining the War Child programme, known as VoiceMore, a youth-advocacy programme to run a project for orphans and separated children and finally setting set up (together with friends) his own community-based organization, Similar Ground, to help hundreds of children to recover from stress and trauma. Based on his own experience, he proposed four recommendations to the Council relating to reintegration of children, longer-term funding for projects and local organizations and community groups, greater participation in decision-making for children and youth, and greater accountability for violations of humanitarian law, including but not limited to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Geneva Conventions and relevant Security Council resolutions in relation to the protection of children.

In their statements, Council members and other delegations expressed concern at the growing number of children subjected to all the six grave violations committed against children in conflict, as defined in relevant Security Council resolutions. Speakers also stressed that children associated with armed or terrorist groups should not be treated as criminals but, rather, as victims.<sup>1009</sup> In that connection, the representative of Kenya expressed his belief that human-rights-sensitive and effective counter-terrorism was a key tool in the protection of children and called for a more robust and consistent counter-terrorism regime to protect children. Moreover, many speakers welcomed the inclusion of Ukraine, Mozambique and Ethiopia as situations of concern in the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict for the year

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<sup>1009</sup> [S/PV.9096, Brazil, Norway, Ghana, China, Canada](#) (on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict) and Switzerland; [S/PV.9096 \(Resumption 1\)](#), Slovenia, Italy, Andorra and Chile.

to come, given the severity of the armed violence in the countries.<sup>1010</sup>

On the way forward, many speakers also underscored that impunity for grave violations against children was unacceptable and called for full accountability through national and international justice mechanisms.<sup>1011</sup> Some speakers underlined that all parties to armed conflict must comply with international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law and to act to prevent and end grave violations against children.<sup>1012</sup> In that connection, speakers encouraged all Member States to commit to the Safe Schools Declaration, the Paris Principles and the Vancouver Principles and to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.<sup>1013</sup>

Speakers held that the agenda on children and armed conflict should be mainstreamed into all efforts and discussions concerning conflict, including conflict prevention, mediation, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, and child-protection provisions and capacities should be incorporated adequately into all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions.<sup>1014</sup> Meanwhile, to facilitate response to threats against children, speakers urged full support for the allocation of targeted and rapid resources, among other things, in order to provide safe accommodation and enhanced protection of displaced refugees and stateless children victims of the six grave violations committed against children in conflict as well as to enable the safe and meaningful participation of victims and survivors in legal proceedings to end impunity.<sup>1015</sup> A majority of speakers noted that the fight against grave

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<sup>1010</sup> [S/PV.9096](#), United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Albania, Canada and Ukraine; [S/PV.9096 \(Resumption 1\)](#), Italy, Germany, European Union, Belgium, Poland, Slovakia, Australia and Bulgaria.

<sup>1011</sup> [S/PV.9096](#), Brazil, Norway, France, India, Gabon, Mexico, United Kingdom, Albania, United States, Canada, Malta, Liechtenstein and Uruguay; [S/PV.9096 \(Resumption 1\)](#), Slovenia, Estonia, Denmark, Italy, European Union, Slovakia, Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Palestine and Morocco.

<sup>1012</sup> [S/PV.9096](#), Canada (on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict), Malta); [S/PV.9096 \(Resumption 1\)](#), Denmark, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Republic of Korea and Georgia.

<sup>1013</sup>. [S/PV.9096](#), France, India, United Arab Emirates, Kenya, Gabon, Mexico, Ireland, China, Canada (on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict), Malta, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Uruguay and Ecuador; [S/PV.9096 \(Resumption 1\)](#), Slovenia, Denmark, Italy, Germany, Botswana, Slovakia, New Zealand, Spain, Andorra, Malaysia, Georgia, Portugal, Chile and Bulgaria.

<sup>1014</sup> [S/PV.9096](#), Brazil, Ghana, United States, India, Kenya, Ireland, Albania and Switzerland; [S/PV.9096 \(Resumption 1\)](#), Poland, Thailand, Malaysia, Bulgaria and Türkiye.

<sup>1015</sup> [S/PV.9096](#), Ghana, Canada (on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict), Liechtenstein and Switzerland; [S/PV.9096 \(Resumption 1\)](#), Thailand, Türkiye, South Africa and Bangladesh.

violations should not end with the release of children but should also include their reintegration into society.

Affirming the important role of the listing mechanism of the annual report of the Secretary-General on child protection, speakers held that clear, objective, impartial, transparent and measurable criteria was critical.<sup>1016</sup> Noting with concern that the Secretary-General's report included situations that were not situations of armed conflict or threats to the maintenance of international peace and security, the representative of India cautioned that attempts to selectively expand the mandate would only politicize its agenda.<sup>1017</sup> The representative of Canada expressed concern about the decision to list the Syrian Government in annex I.B to the report of the Secretary-General and considered that the decision had set a troubling precedent as he opined that such decision should have been taken only based on a significant decrease in serious violations and respect for specific time-bound commitments.

In 2022, the Council addressed the children and armed conflict agenda in several of its country- and region-specific decisions and in decisions relating to thematic items. Selected provisions of decisions in which the Council explicitly referenced actions or measures concerning the agenda during 2022 are listed in table 2. In 2022, the Council, inter alia: (a) condemned and demanded the cessation of violations and abuses against children, including attacks on schools and the deprivation of access to education, and called for accountability and compliance with international instruments; (b) called for the implementation of action plans and programmes on children and armed conflict, with new emphasis on preventing and responding to sexual violence against children; (c) underscored the importance of taking into account child protection concerns in the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration processes and security sector reform; (d) requested monitoring, analysis and reporting on violations and abuses against children; (e) mandated United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions with child protection tasks; (f) imposed or called for the imposition of measures against

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<sup>1016</sup> [S/PV.9096](#), Ireland, China, Canada (also on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict), Malta, Liechtenstein and Switzerland; [S/PV.9096 \(Resumption 1\)](#), Slovenia and Belgium.

<sup>1017</sup> See [S/PV.9096](#).

perpetrators of violations against children, and building on resolution [2601 \(2021\)](#),<sup>1018</sup> (g) called for the protection, respect and promotion of the right to education in armed conflict.

**Table 1**  
**Meetings: Children and armed conflict**

<i>Meeting record and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
<a href="#">S/PV.8889</a> (29 October 2021)		Draft resolution submitted by 99 Member States <sup>a</sup> ( <a href="#">S/2021/893</a> )	88 Member States <sup>b</sup>		Three Council members (Norway, Niger, India)	Resolution <a href="#">2601 (2021)</a> 15-0-0

<sup>a</sup>Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Morocco, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Türkiye, Ukraine, Uruguay, Yemen.

<sup>b</sup>Brazil (President of the Council) was represented by its Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>c</sup>The representative of Botswana spoke on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect. The representative of Canada spoke on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict. The representative of Denmark spoke on behalf of the Nordic Countries. Hungary was represented by its Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

**Table 2**  
**Selection of provisions relevant to children and armed conflict, by theme and agenda item**

	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
	<b>Condemnation of, and demands for cessation of, violations and abuses against children and calls for accountability and compliance with international instruments</b>		
<b>Country and region-specific</b>	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution <a href="#">2659 (2022)</a>	26, 27, 56
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution <a href="#">2666 (2022)</a>	9, 10
	The situation in Mali	Resolution <a href="#">2640 (2022)</a>	5, 12, 47
	The situation in Somalia	Resolution <a href="#">2628 (2022)</a>	14, 14 (a),(b),(d)
		Resolution <a href="#">2657 (2022)</a>	10, 10 (a)(i), (a)(iv)
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution <a href="#">2625 (2022)</a>	17
	The situation concerning Haiti	Resolution <a href="#">2653 (2022)</a>	1
<b>Thematic</b>	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	<a href="#">S/PRST/2022/7</a>	fifth

<sup>1018</sup> For further information, see *Repertoire, Supplement 2021*, part I, sect. 24.

	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
<b>Action plans and programmes on children and armed conflict</b>			
<b>Country and region-specific</b>	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution <a href="#">2659 (2022)</a>	27
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution <a href="#">2666 (2022)</a>	8, 10, 24 (i)(e)
	The situation in Mali	Resolution <a href="#">2640 (2022)</a>	48, 49
	The situation in Somalia	Resolution <a href="#">2628 (2022)</a>	14 (e)
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution <a href="#">2657 (2022)</a>	10 (b), 13 (b)
	Peace and security in Africa	<a href="#">S/PRST/2022/6</a>	nineteenth
<b>Child protection in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform</b>			
<b>Country and region-specific</b>	Peace and security in Africa	<a href="#">S/PRST/2022/6</a>	sixth
	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution <a href="#">2659 (2022)</a>	11, 36 (e)(i)
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	<a href="#">S/PRST/2022/4</a> Resolution <a href="#">2666 (2022)</a>	fourth 11,24(ii)(g), 24(ii)(h), 24(ii)(k)
<b>Thematic</b>	Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	<a href="#">S/PRST/2022/7</a>	13
<b>Monitoring, analysis and reporting on violations and abuses against children</b>			
<b>Country and region-specific</b>	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution <a href="#">2659 (2022)</a>	36(b)(ii)
	The situation in Afghanistan	Resolution <a href="#">2626 (2022)</a>	5 (g)
	The situation in Mali	Resolution <a href="#">2640 (2022)</a>	26 (d)(ii)
	The situation in Somalia	Resolution <a href="#">2662 (2022)</a>	48
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution <a href="#">2625 (2022)</a> Resolution <a href="#">2633 (2022)</a>	3(d)(ii) 21
<b>Child protection mandates in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions</b>			
<b>Country and region-specific</b>	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution <a href="#">2659 (2022)</a>	35(a)(iv), 36(b)(ii), 36(e)(i), 43, 48
	The situation in Afghanistan	Resolution <a href="#">2626 (2022)</a>	5 (a), (f), (j)
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution <a href="#">2666 (2022)</a>	24(i)(e), (ii)(g), (h), (k), 28,
	The situation in Iraq	Resolution <a href="#">2631 (2022)</a>	2(c)(ii), (f)
	The situation in Mali	Resolution <a href="#">2640 (2022)</a>	26 (c)(iii), (d)(ii), 41
	The situation in Somalia	Resolution <a href="#">2625 (2022)</a>	3(a)(i)

	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution <a href="#">2625 (2022)</a>	3(a)(i), (a)(v)
<b>Measures against the perpetrators of violations and abuses against children</b>			
<b>Country and region-specific</b>	The situation concerning Haiti	Resolution <a href="#">2653 (2022)</a>	16 (a), (e)
	The situation in the Middle East	Resolution <a href="#">2624 (2022)</a>	12
<b>Calls for the protection, respect and promotion of the right to education in armed conflict</b>			
<b>Country and region-specific</b>	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution <a href="#">2659 (2022)</a>	56
	The situation in Afghanistan	Resolution <a href="#">2626 (2022)</a>	5 (f)

<sup>a</sup> For additional information on mandates and decisions relevant to peacekeeping and political missions, see part X.