



## **Statement for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Children and Armed Conflict mandate**

New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to mark the 20th anniversary of Graça Machel's landmark report "Impact of armed conflict in Children" and the establishment of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

We congratulate the Secretary General's Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui, and her predecessors on the achievements made in protecting Children over the past 20 years.

We also acknowledge the work of UNICEF, as well as OHCHR, DPKO, DPA, UNHCR and other United Nations entities, on child protection.

We highlight the important contribution of civil society in advocating for children and contributing to the strengthened response by the United Nations.

New Zealand reiterates its full support for the Children and Armed Conflict mandate.

We have made the commitment in the 2030 agenda to ensure every child grows up free from violence and exploitation – the work of this mandate over the next 15 years is crucial in achieving this.

We welcome the opportunity being taken here today to look forward to what more can be done to ensure that the framework continues to develop, strengthen and further protect children affected by armed conflict.

New Zealand stresses three key focus areas:

The first is improving engagement with non-state actors.

They represent the majority of those listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report so we must continue to find avenues of engagement.

New Zealand supports the idea of extending the "children not soldiers" campaign to Non-state actors.

The second is the protection of education and healthcare.

We need to work harder to end attacks on schools and hospitals and stop military use of these institutions.

The negative consequences for the education and health of children can last a lifetime.

We take this opportunity to remind states of Security Council Resolution 2286 on Healthcare in Armed Conflict, and Resolution 1998 on the protection of Children and Armed Conflict, and urge full implementation of these resolutions.

We also reiterate our support for the Safe Schools Declaration and we encourage other members to consider endorsing this important document.

Third is improving the reintegration and rehabilitation of children separated from armed forces and groups.

This is essential to providing children the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Without adequate support, children may return to violence.

These reintegration efforts need to take into account the specific needs of girls and of children with disabilities.

These children should not be an afterthought in reintegration and rehabilitation efforts.

Finally, we wish to take this opportunity to stress the importance of member states' support for the children and armed conflict mandate and the integrity of the child protection framework.

Anchoring the framework is the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

It ensures that the international community is not blind to grave violations being committed against children.

It provides the opportunity for verified information to one day be used to bring perpetrators to account.

New Zealand fully supports its work.

