



High Level Event on Children and Armed Conflict

Launch of the Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict

February 12, 2020 – 03:00pm-04:30pm
ECOSOC Chamber UN Headquarters New York

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Concept

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG CAAC) and the Permanent Missions of Belgium and Sweden to the United Nations are hosting a high-level event to launch the *Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict*.

Member States, UN representatives as well as child protection and mediation experts will discuss the importance of including child protection measures into peace negotiations and mediation efforts from the start. They will share concrete examples of situations in which child protection issues were successfully integrated into peace processes, with a tangible positive impact for children.

2. Background and rationale

The mandate on children and armed conflict was established in 1996 and, over the years, the protection of children in situations of armed conflict has been increasingly integrated into peace negotiations and peace agreements.

In its first resolution on Children and Armed Conflict in 1999¹, the UN Security Council urged “*parties to armed conflicts to ensure that the protection, welfare and rights of children are taken into account during peace negotiations and throughout the process of consolidating peace in the aftermath of conflict*”. The Security Council repeated this call throughout the ensuing twenty years of resolutions, presidential statements and debates.

In its Presidential Statement of 31 October 2017², the Security Council encouraged the Special Representative to develop, together with relevant child protection actors, a practical guidance on the integration of child protection issues in peace processes.

Subsequently, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict initiated a consultative process with relevant child protection and mediation actors, including the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). In

¹ S/RES/1261 (1999)

² S/PRST/2017/21 (2017)



November 2018 and October 2019 further consultations were held in Geneva and Brussels with support of the Governments of Sweden and Belgium respectively.

Resolution 2427 (2018) stressed *"the importance of giving due consideration to child protection issues from the early stages of all peace processes, in particular the integration of child protection provisions, as well as of peace agreements that put strong emphasis on the best interest of the child, the treatment of children separated from armed groups as victims and focus on family and community-based reintegration."*³ It also called upon States and the UN *"to mainstream child protection into all relevant activities in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations with the aim of sustaining peace and preventing conflict."*⁴

The consultative process concluded that, in peace negotiations, child protection issues were mostly addressed in an ad hoc manner. Although it is widely acknowledged that the protection of children's rights is essential to community stability and development, the consideration of child protection in peacemaking needs greater attention. Children's rights, needs and concerns are hardly addressed in peace processes. One reason for this is that mediators are seldom provided with specific and effective tools designed to identify child protection and child rights issues, including on how to consult children, as appropriate, and to channel their possible added value in peace negotiations.

The *Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict* aims to address this gap in a non-prescriptive manner by providing mediators and other stakeholders supporting mediation efforts with specific measures for consideration in peace talks and peace agreements. By doing so, it seeks to assist them in the identification of entry points and possible confidence-building measures to engage parties on this issue.

3. Objective

The event will serve to launch the practical guidelines for mediators for the wider public, highlighting the added value of including child protection issues in peace processes with a view to sustainable and long-term peace and security. The tool provides practical guidance to mediators in order to take these issues into consideration at the early stages of peace negotiations and processes of peace consolidation.

After the Security Council briefing in the morning of 12 February, this event will be an opportunity for UN Member States and civil society representatives to hear from and discuss with a panel of experts the newly-developed practical guidance. The panelists will share concrete examples of situations where child protection issues were successfully integrated into peace processes and peace agreements, with tangible results for children, including their release from armed forces or groups and reintegration into civilian life.

The session will also explore how addressing child protection concerns in turn contributed to the overall peace process.

³ S/RES/2427 (2018), PP 12

⁴ S/RES/2427 (2018), OP 3



4. Format

Introductory speeches and panel discussion, with the possibility of interventions from the floor. Audiovisual material will be shown.

5. Program and speakers

Introductory remarks:

- H.E. Philippe Goffin, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Kingdom of Belgium
- H.E. Ambassador Magnus Lennartsson, Deputy Permanent Representative, Chargé d'affaires a.i., Sweden

Key note address:

- H.E. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children And Armed Conflict, to present the *Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict*

Panel discussion:

- H.E. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (VTC)
- Ms. Dragica Mikavica, Save the Children
- Mr. José Tarache Niño, former child soldier, to share experiences from the Colombian peace process

Moderated by H.E. Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations

Open floor + response from panel:

- Interventions from the floor of maximum 2 minutes each. The co-organizers will accommodate as many member states and partners who are interested in intervening as possible. If time does not allow for all to intervene, priority will be given according to the following criteria: stakeholder diversity, geographical diversity and protocol.

Concluding remarks:

- H.E. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children And Armed Conflict