



Summary of the event organized to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Children and Armed Conflict Mandate & Launch of the Study on the Evolution of the Mandate

Co-organizers for this event: Norway, Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, France, Estonia, Mexico, Niger, Qatar, the United Kingdom, and OSRSG CAAC

18 January 2022 - 15:00hrs to 17:00hrs (virtual event) agenda attached

The event was moderated by **H.E. Robert Rae, Permanent Representative of Canada** to the United Nations and started by welcoming the speakers and participants. He underlined the launch of the 'Study on the evolution of the Children and Armed Conflict mandate 1996-2021' and acknowledged Member States, Civil Society, all actors involved in peacebuilding and peacekeeping and the United Nations who contributed to the development of the study. He highlighted the accomplishments of the mandate and stressed the need for focusing attention on rules of war of establishing the roots of humanitarian thinking.

Opening remarks

Secretary-General (via video message) acknowledged the achievements of the children and armed conflict (CAAC) mandate. He called on all partners to continue supporting the OSRSG CAAC' monitoring and reporting work. He reiterated the need for strengthening support of reintegration of children and prioritising the needs and rights of children in peace negotiations.

Norway (H.E. Anniken Huitfeldt, Minister of Foreign Affairs) congratulated the 25th anniversary of the mandate. Reaffirmed Norway's commitment to continuing the unity to protect children in situations of armed conflict. Highlighted child protection must be mainstreamed in the council's work and urged the council to provide sufficient personnel and funds to ensure that children are protected. Underlined that Member States must take concrete measures to prevent violations against children. Further underlined that the integrity and independence of the CAAC mandate to monitor and report on grave violations against children is key. Mentioned that all parties to conflict that commit these violations must be held to the same transparent standards, including the listing and de-listing criteria. Ended by encouraging the international community to use the tools at hand to prevent new cycles of violence and conflict and help build sustainable peace.

SRSG CAAC reiterated the achievements of the mandate and highlighted the ongoing plight of children in situations of conflict. She thanked all Member States, United Nations entities, civil society organisations and children who contributed to the study on the evolution of the CAAC mandate. She emphasised protection and prevention, collaboration, and reintegration as the



foundations for the mandate to move forward. She called on the international community to continue to support child protection capacity on the ground through providing support for the improvement of data collection and analysis.

Panel interventions

UNICEF (Ms. Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director) emphasised the positive impact of the CAAC mandate on the lives of children. Underlined that the UN should continue to prioritise the mandate and increase visibility and awareness of the impact of conflict on children. Highlighted the need for taking steps to end impunity and advance accountability for children in situations of armed conflict.

DPPA (Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs) thanked the SRSG for the work of her office over the last 25 years and highlighted the convening power and expertise of DPPA and OSRSG CAAC that can provide leverage to advocate for child protection with national actors. Emphasised the need for collaboration with other actors and collective responses. Reiterated DPPA's commitment to ensure the protection of children affected by war.

DPO (Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations – via video message) congratulated the SRSG CAAC on the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the mandate. Stressed the role of peacekeepers in dialogue with parties to conflict, supporting monitoring and reporting as well as the integration of child protection elements into peace negotiations and agreements. Underlined the protection of children is at the heart of UN peacekeeping. Reiterated DPPA's commitment to play its part in protecting children affected by armed conflict.

Forrest Whitaker (Advocate for Children Affected by War – via video message) thanked the SRSG CAAC for her dedication which has made a difference for the renewal of the mandate and strengthening of the Global Coalition for Reintegration. He emphasised that through reintegration and rehabilitation, former child soldiers can become highly valuable assets for their community. He acknowledged the power of the international community in increasing global awareness and channelling resources to support children affected by armed conflict.

Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security (General Romeo Dallaire) Congratulated the SRSG CAAC on the 25th anniversary of the mandate and the launch of the study. Underlined the Vancouver Principles and their impact on the effective operational capability to reduce the casualties of children. Urged all Member States to continue advancing capacities to implement the principles. Highlighted that preventing the recruitment of children needs to be prioritised and applied in practice. Emphasised that the resources must be available to meet the critical components of peace processes. Further underlined the need to place the children in the centre of



the peace and security efforts. Reiterated his commitment to continuing support and prioritising children's rights in establishing sustainable peace and ending generational conflicts.

Aisha Zannah Mustapha (young activist from Maiduguri (Nigeria) and girl's education advocate) shared the stories of children suffering from armed conflict. She highlighted that attacks on schools must end and further emphasised the importance of education for the future of children, especially girls. She called on all actors and youths to take concrete action to prioritise the protection of children affected by conflict at the national, regional and global levels.

France (H.E. Nicolas de Rivière, Permanent Representative) acknowledged the 25 years since the establishment of the CAAC mandate. Highlighted that the perpetrators of violations must be held accountable and noted the importance to provide greater support to the monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) and emphasized the need for decisive actions of the Security Council Working Group, including on the follow up to its conclusions on the ground. Further emphasised the need for continuing support for projects for access to education in all circumstances. Reiterated his call for the endorsement of the Paris Principles, the Vancouver Principles and the Safe Schools Declaration.

Mexico (H.E. Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez, Permanent Representative) congratulated the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the mandate. Underlined that hospitals and schools must be protected in all situations. Recommended a more rigorous follow-up of the Security Council Working Group's conclusion to take active measures with parties to conflict that commit recurring violations, as well as to strengthen coordination between the Working Group and other subsidiary bodies of the Council. Reaffirmed Mexico's commitment to the mandate.

Niger (H.E. Abdou Abarry, Permanent Representative) acknowledged the achievements made by the mandate. Stressed the importance of education as a pillar of the prevention of violent extremism. Recommended raising awareness amongst parties to conflict and parents on their responsibilities to protect children, improving and strengthening the means of documenting violations, addressing the root causes of insecurity, and providing consistent support to countries in conflict and/or post-conflict situations. Reaffirmed Niger's commitment to jointly work to end violations against children in conflict.

Argentina (H.E. María del Carmen Squeff, Permanent Representative) expressed its dedicated support to the work of the Office to prevent and end the six grave violations against children in armed conflict. Emphasised the Safe School Declaration highlighted that education is a fundamental human right and a pillar of equitable development, hence it must be protected. Stressed the importance of the Global Coalition for Reintegration and renewed Argentina's commitment to the mandate.

Notes on the interventions from the floor



Belgium (H.E. Philippe Kridelka, Permanent Representative) thanked Aisha for highlighting girls' education in the Sahel. Emphasised that perpetrators are not properly held accountable and acknowledged that accountability is key to ensuring children's protection. Highlighted three points in relation to accountability: 1) continuing support to the MRM and the reintegration of children 2) the importance of integrating child protection into judicial tools, 3) the governments' adherence to international norms. Commended the OSRSG CAAC for its achievements and reaffirmed Belgium's continuing support of the mandate.

Qatar (H.E. Jassim Al-Maawda, Deputy Permanent Representative) acknowledged that the CAAC mandate is one most important components of peace, security, human rights, development and peacebuilding. Mentioned the GA resolution that created the international day to protect education from attacks and underlined that impunity must end for those who attack schools. Mentioned the opening of the Doha hub to work on CAAC in the Middle East region and generate support for children affected by conflict and promote the collection of best practices. Highlighted Qatar's strong commitment to the mandate.

Albania (H.E. Albana Dautllari, Deputy Permanent Representative) urged parties to conflict to stop violations, attacks on schools and hospitals by upholding IHL and IHRL. Highlighted the need to focus on prevention and Albania's support to the efforts of SG and his call for placing the protection of children in armed conflict into the central part of UN peace and security agenda and at the core of prevention efforts. Emphasised the need for strengthening and improving the CAAC mandate to tackle the actions and violations made by non-state groups. Highlighted Albania's intention to support the CAAC agenda in the SC and mainstream it in the work of the UN.

UK (Mr. Fergus Eckersley, Political Coordinator) commended the SRSG CAAC for the important work to bring the agenda forward in the past 25 years. Acknowledged that protecting children is a moral, political and strategic priority. Emphasised the UK's commitment to the Safe Schools Declaration within the context of the UK's girls' education campaign and highlighted that these initiatives must be gender-responsive. Called on all Member States to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration. Mentioned the UK's launch of Call to Action on children born as a result of sexual violence, endorsed by SRSG CAAC, SVC and VAC. Reiterated the UK's continuing support for the mandate to ensure it stays strong.

Greece (H.E. Maria Theofili, Permanent Representative) congratulated the SRSG for her commitment to substantial progress for the lives of children in conflict and welcomed the launch of the 25th anniversary study. Highlighted, in order to enhance the national policies, Greece has included the protection of conflict-affected girls in its first national action plan on WPS. Further emphasised that only by protecting children from war and violence we can create sustainable, peaceful and resilient societies. Concluded by underlining Greece support to the CAAC agenda.



Luxembourg (H.E. Olivier Maes, Permanent Representative) acknowledged that the 25th anniversary study highlights the remarkable work of the SRSG CAAC. Emphasised the adverse impact of climate change and COVID-19 on the situation of children affected by armed conflict. Highlighted the need to make progress in mainstreaming the CAAC mandate to better protect children and strengthen data collection. Encouraged all Member States to ratify OPAC. Underlined Luxembourg's continuing collaboration to prevent and end grave violations against children and reaffirmed its commitment for the first term at the Human Rights Council in 2022-2024, for which the promotion of children's rights will be a key priority.

Malta (H.E. Vanessa Frazier, Permanent Representative) reaffirmed its strong commitment to the OSRSG CAAC. Highlighted that the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration. Mentioned that legislation alone is not enough to prevent violations against children, stronger political commitment needs to be demonstrated and the MRM is key in gathering evidence and reporting to the Security Council. Reaffirmed that Malta will continue to work to support the work of the OSRSG CAAC and that CAAC will be a priority for Malta if elected to the Security Council.

Slovenia (H.E. Boštjan Malovrh, Permanent Representative) emphasised that accountability is key for survivors to receive justice. Underlined that the protection of schools against attacks and military use is essential to guarantee the education of children. Called for the adoption of existing instruments such as the Safe Schools Declaration, Paris and Vancouver Principles. Stressed that children must be protected from harm and that children are the priority of Slovenia humanitarian assistance, including reintegration programmes. Underlined Slovenia's full support for the mandate.

Switzerland (H.E. Pascale Baeriswyl, Permanent Representative) congratulated the SRSG and her team for the work done so far. Mentioned that IHL needs to be fully respected and implemented at the national level and urged the SC and UN to honour this anniversary with further commitments. Highlighted that the existing tools to prevent violence against children need to be fully used and called on the SG to continue to provide a complete and impartial list based on the MRM data. Underscored that Switzerland is engaged in more efforts of raising awareness on CAAC. Further highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic and measures taken have exacerbated vulnerabilities to children, especially girls. Thanked the child protection staff operating despite the challenges and highlighted support to the UN, the MRM, and the SCWG.

EU (H.E. Björn Olof Skoog, Ambassador and Head of Delegation) thanked the SRSG CAAC for her work. Highlighted its strong support to the CAAC mandate for the past 25 years and reiterated its commitment to strengthen the protection of children affected by conflict. Recognised the increasing number of violations against children in armed conflict, impacting boys and girls differently, and stressed the urgent need for a gender-sensitive approach.



Underlined the need to prioritise children’s rights and needs in global COVID-19 responses and recovery programmes as well as the protection of schools and relevant civilians to ensure the continuation of education. Urged all SC members to mainstream the CAAC agenda across the work of the Council, inviting the SRSG to brief on country situations and raising CAAC issues. Also encouraged the SC members to ensure that child protection is addressed in relevant mandate discussions of all UN missions. Acknowledged the independence, impartiality and credibility of MRM. Reiterated the EU’s continuing engagement in the conflict prevention agenda and implementation of the CAAC agenda. Reemphasised that the protection and promotion of the rights of the child are central to the EU’s human rights policy and its commitment to promote international humanitarian law.

Morocco (H.E. Omar Kadiri, Deputy Permanent Representative) recognised the contribution of the mandate to persuading the international community for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. Acknowledged the ongoing violations of children’s rights and emphasised that the perpetrators must be held accountable. Condemned the recruitment of children by the “Polisario” armed group and called for the opening of an international investigation into the situation. Emphasised the cooperation across the international community to develop and strengthen action plans that guarantee the protection of all children, and ensure monitoring, reporting and responding to violations against them. Reiterated Morocco’s commitment to the protection and promotion of all children’s rights and thanked all entities engaged in the protection of children in armed conflict.

Ireland (H.E. Brian Flynn, Deputy Permanent Representative) commended the Office of the SRSG, and the entities involved in the consultations on the 25th anniversary study. Reiterated Ireland’s commitment to the protection needs of children in conflict situations; safeguard their human rights; and ensure accountability for the perpetrators. Highlighted the importance of using the lessons learned from the past 25 years to propel the agenda forward. Urged that the momentum must be used to better understand and respond to the challenges (e.g. climate change & COVID-19) to ensure the continues efficacy of CAAC mandate, end impunity for grave violations and uphold the rights of children living in situations of armed conflict.

Costa Rica (H.E. Maritza Chan, Deputy Permanent Representative) underscored the use of Sexual Violence as a weapon of war is unacceptable and that impunity of perpetrators must end by strengthening laws and enforcing them. Emphasised that children must be put at the centre of any international action, including boosting services and programs that acknowledge and meet their special needs. Stated that schools are being targeted and militarily used and called on Member States to join in support of a strong Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from Humanitarian Harm arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. Concluded noting that military spending has continued to increase during the pandemic and that disarmament and sustained reduction should be prioritized to better protect children.



Germany (H.E. Günter Sautter, Deputy Permanent Representative) thanked the SRSG for her work. Highlighted the importance of ensuring the implementation of the existing framework of protection of children in conflict through endorsement the Safe Schools Declaration, the Paris and Vancouver Principles and ratification of OPAC. Emphasised that accountability is essential, the listing and de-listing in the annex of the SG annual report on CAAC remains a powerful tool. Urged that the cycle of violence must end and children should be treated primarily as victims and receive the support they need.

Poland (H.E. Joanna Skoczek, Deputy Permanent Representative) acknowledged the work of the OSRSG CAAC, UNICEF and other partners. Stressed that the CAAC agenda must be implemented as part of wider human rights, peace and security, peacebuilding, development and humanitarian agendas. Highlighted the need for greater attention on the impact of armed conflict on girls and the specific needs of girls. Underlined the importance of mainstreaming child protection in all situations on the SC agenda. Further emphasised the role of regional organisations in enhancing the protection of children and stated that Poland's OSCE Chairmanship will focus on supporting conflict resolution and conflict-affected populations. Reaffirmed Poland's support for the CAAC mandate.

Watchlist (Ms. Adrienne Lapar, Director) encouraged all stakeholders to defend and uphold existing protection frameworks and urged governments that have not yet signed or ratified OPAC and endorsed Vancouver and Paris Principles and the Safe Schools Declaration to do so and to incorporate corresponding guidelines into their national military doctrines and training. Emphasised that governments must ensure that efforts to counter terrorism and address national security concerns are consistent with their obligations to children and highlighted that children should be treated primarily as victims. Underlined that data on grave violations including the countries not on the agenda should inform early warning and prevention efforts and related information should be included by the SG in his annual report. Highlighted the importance of promoting accountability, impartiality in the lists, and urged governments to bring all perpetrators to justice, and the inclusion of child-specific expertise in investigative mechanisms. Called for the promotion of children's participation in decision-making processes, as well as in peace processes.

USA (Mr. Rodney M. Hunter, Political Coordinator) reiterated its commitment to the CAAC mandate and acknowledged its direct and indirect impact on children over the past 25 years. Noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated children's vulnerability and highlighted that children's rights and needs must be prioritised in the global pandemic response and recovery programs. Recognised that girls often face systemic discrimination in their communities, are at high risk of gender-based violence both during and after conflict and have unique needs in recovery after conflict.



Brazil (Mr. Emerson Kloss, Minister Counsellor) recognised the achievements of the CAAC mandate and MRM. Highlighted that the strengthened data analysis and management capacity, as well as gender-sensitive approaches, will be key in the years ahead. Reaffirmed Brazil's active engagement in the discussion on the SCWG on CAAC. Further mentioned the possible contribution of the Peacebuilding Commission to the CAAC agenda, particularly for reintegration. Underlined the fundamental importance of strengthening capacity-building programmes to enable national and regional authorities to develop their own child protection capacities in conflict areas. Encouraged the use and dissemination of the Practical Guidance for Mediators published by the OSRSG CAAC in 2020.

Russian Federation (Mr. Stepan Kuzmenkov, Senior Counsellor) thanked the SRSG CAAC for her commitment and acknowledged the achievements made by her Office. Reaffirmed Russia's support of the SRSG to cooperate with Member States. Called on the international community to ensure the implementation of existing legislative tools. Emphasised that close cooperation with Governments is critical as they play a paramount role in protecting and rehabilitating children in armed conflict. Further highlighted that the protection of children can be most effectively upheld by the international community if it abides by the existing mechanisms for the division of labour within the UN system through the consistent and targeted work of each of its entities in its own field.

Italy (Ms. Simona De Martino, First Counsellor) congratulated the SRSG for her work and dedication. Highlighted that the protection of children must be prioritized on every international agenda to guarantee peaceful, safe and sustainable development. Emphasized the importance of putting an end to the grave violations against children during armed conflict, stating Italy's commitment to relevant initiatives, including the Safe Schools Declaration. Acknowledged the cooperation between the Universities Network for CAAC and the OSRSG CAAC. Reaffirmed Italy's increasing efforts to contribute to the implementation of the CAAC agenda.

India (Mr. Ashish Sharma, First Secretary) stated that the national governments have the primary responsibility for protecting children's rights as mandated by the CRC and encouraged Member States to ratify the OPAC. Urged Member States to adopt legal frameworks for the protection of child rights and provide holistic development opportunities. Underlined the cooperation between the UN and Member States in developing policies for repatriation and reintegration of children and the importance of assisting national governments for capacity building and strengthening legal and operational tools for child protection. Reiterated India's call for ending impunity of all actors perpetrating grave violations against children. Urged Member States to keep child protection concerns at the core of their pandemic response measures and recovery plans and reaffirmed India's commitment to UN endeavours to protect children in armed conflict.



Ghana (Ms. Nana Akua Tenkorang, First Secretary) commended the SRSR CAAC and Norway for the event and acknowledged that best practices and lessons outlined in the 25th anniversary study will strengthen the role of the UN in the protection of children affected by conflict. Condemned the six grave violations against children and called on the international community to intensify its efforts to ensure the parties to conflict and individuals involved in these violations are brought to justice. Called on the Security Council to ensure that child protection is prioritised at all levels of its engagement, including peacekeeping and operations, peace processes and early warning. Reiterated Ghana's commitment to ensuring the maximum protection of conflict-affected children and ending violations against them throughout its membership of the WG CAAC. Ended by encouraging the strengthening of international collaboration to protect children in conflict.