



**Security Council Annual Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict  
23 June 2020  
Written statement by Slovenia**

Mr President,

We wish to thank the French presidency of the Council for this open debate, Secretary-General for his annual report, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Ms Virginia Gamba, Executive Director of UNICEF Ms Henrietta Fore and Mariam for sharing her experience.

Slovenia aligns itself with the statements presented by the European Union and by Canada on behalf of Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, and wishes to add some remarks in its national capacity.

Mr President,

The 2020 marks the anniversaries of two milestones in the normative framework of the protection of children affected by armed conflict – 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005) on Children and Armed Conflict, which established the landmark Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.

Nonetheless, the latest Secretary-General's annual report on Children and Armed Conflict reminds us that there is still a long way ahead of us. We are deeply concerned that in 2019 there were more than 25.000 grave violations committed against children in armed conflicts, an alarming increase of cases of denial of humanitarian access to children, continuous attacks on schools and hospitals and inconceivable prevalence of sexual violence against girls and boys.

It is therefore of key importance to ensure the unabated respect for international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties to conflicts around the world. For the protection of children and prevention of grave violations against them accountability and fight against impunity should be strengthened. We call on all those States that have not already done so, to consider ratifying the Optional Protocol and joining the Paris Principles and Commitments, the Safe School Declaration and Vancouver Principles.

We share the concerns that the Covid pandemic and its consequences deteriorate the plight of children affected by armed conflicts around the world, including by impeding activities to protect the children. In particular the pandemic has worsen access to education, healthcare and clean drinking water. Education is one of the few signs of hope for children affected by armed conflicts.

Mr President,

The Secretary-General's report also shows some promising developments in 2019 since fewer children were killed and maimed, recruited and used and abducted than the year before. More than 13,200 children were released or separated from armed forces or armed groups. This progress was possible due to continued efforts by the Special Representative and her office, this Council and its Working Group, UNICEF, Child Protection Advisers in the filed missions and all others in this network of protection, and we would like to commend them for their tireless work.

Slovenia is not just a strong advocate of child protection in international forums, but contributes also to the efforts to lessen the burden of children affected by conflicts on the ground. In 2019 and 2020 has supported several projects for children from Ukraine, Palestine and Syria as well as with humanitarian aid to UNICEF for Yemeni children. In addition, projects aimed to empower children to become actors for peace were conducted in more than 20 countries worldwide.

Thank you!