



Security Council Briefing on Children and Armed Conflict: Prevention of Grave Violations, 13 February 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Her Excellency Ambassador Vanessa Frazier
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Check Against Delivery

[I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Malta]

Let me first warmly welcome and thank Special Representative Gamba and Special Representative Maalla M'jid for their contributions. I also thank [Ms. Divina] for sharing her insights and for inspiring us to do better.

In 2018, the Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2427, with 98-co-sponsors, established the centrality of children to UN conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Malta underlines that cycles of violence can only be broken by identifying and addressing risks children are facing *before* conflict erupts. These include systemic factors that increase susceptibility, such as poverty, displacement, and the absence of social protection.

Resolution 2427 emphasises that children who are accused of having committed crimes during armed conflicts should be treated primarily as victims and insisted that particular attention be given to children associated with terrorist groups.



The Human Rights Council also plays an important role in including the protection of children in its resolutions, and in the recommendations of the universal periodic review process.

A sustained and effective coordinated response across the UN system is critical for preventing child trafficking and cross-border abduction, and for protecting children who are unaccompanied or separated from their families and caregivers.

In this regard, we believe that we should leverage existing mechanisms to strengthen cross-border monitoring and reporting, and for repatriating and reintegrating children captured or released in countries other than those of origin. Regional and sub-regional organisations have a central role to play, too.

We would certainly welcome more systematic reporting on early warning indicators of grave violations against children in armed conflict, and the implications of such violations for regional peace and stability, by the Secretary-General. Survivor-centred approaches must also inform prevention and early warning, as conflict-related sexual violence is often preceded by discrimination, persecution, hate speech and incitement to violence based on gender and group identity.

Although conflict-related sexual violence disproportionately affects girls, sexual violence targeting boys is used to torture, subjugate, and emasculate,



particularly in situations of detention. It is pertinent to note that boys account for more than 95% of conflict-related detainees. Military training and standard operating procedures should also address the gender specific needs of girls and boys.

Engaging children's participation in identifying pre-existing risks and vulnerabilities leading to grave violations is an important principle. Their perspectives are crucial for improving understanding about the context in which violations occur, and the impact of conflict and peace processes on them.

Malta further underscores the importance of equal access to literacy and quality education, which can contribute to conflict prevention and provide children with alternative pathways. Education is safeguarded under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, as well as political frameworks such as the Safe Schools Declaration, and the Paris Principles. I take the opportunity to encourage all States to endorse and implement these important instruments, including also the Vancouver Principles.

In closing, Malta welcomes a coordinated approach between the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Office of the Special Representative on Violence Against Children, to strengthen prevention, to respond to violations, and to address risk factors. In



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addressing conflict related sexual violence, we also welcome further coordination with the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

[I now resume my duties as President]