



PERMANENT MISSION
OF MALTA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

UNSC Arria-Formula Meeting Red Hand Day 2026: Safe Education to Prevent the Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict

Remarks delivered by Mr. Albert Grech, Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations

President,

Malta aligns itself with the statements delivered by the European Union and by the GoFs for CAAC and for Education and Lifelong Learning, and would like to add the following in its national capacity.

We thank Panama and the co-sponsors for organising this meeting as well as the briefers for highlighting the importance of education in preventing the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

Malta is deeply alarmed by the escalating scale and severity of grave violations committed against children in crisis situations including the attacks on schools and the military use of schools and hospitals worldwide. These attacks are driving millions of children out of education.



Children and Armed Conflict was a priority for Malta during our 2023–2024 term on the Security Council. As President of the Council in February 2023, Malta convened its first signature event on CAAC, focused on preventing grave violations where education was highlighted as a crucial pillar of prevention, with clear evidence that children who are out of school are significantly more vulnerable to recruitment and other abuses.

Ensuring the continuity of safe, inclusive and quality education during conflict is therefore not only a development objective, but a frontline protection measure indispensable to eradicating poverty, strengthening resilience, and preventing the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Education is also central to reintegration efforts for children formerly associated with armed forces and groups.

During Malta’s tenure as Chair of the Security Council CAAC Working Group, field visits to Nigeria and Colombia reinforced this reality. In Nigeria, attacks on schools and prolonged disruption of education heightened children’s exposure to recruitment. In Colombia, timely access to education and vocational training strengthened reintegration efforts.



We believe that reintegration programmes should also be gender responsive. Girls formerly associated with armed groups often face stigma, early and forced marriage, and exclusion from formal education. Tailored psychosocial support and community sensitisation are essential to ensure their sustainable reintegration and prevent re-recruitment.

Against this backdrop, Malta welcomes the growing support for the Safe Schools Declaration and welcomes initiatives such as the Guidance for Teachers and Educators developed by UNESCO and the OSRSG CAAC.

We also emphasise the importance of building capacity on the Children and Armed Conflict agenda to empower practitioners around the world. In collaboration with the OSRSG CAAC, Malta proudly supports the CAAC Primer and the Advanced Training on Children and Armed Conflict to strengthen expertise globally.

Mr President,

Protecting children remains a core pillar of Malta's foreign policy. Malta remains firmly committed to working with all partners to strengthen prevention, respond decisively to violations, and address the underlying risk factors that expose children to harm.

Thank you.