



PERMANENT MISSION
OF MALTA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

UNSC Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict

Statement delivered by HE Natasha Meli, Permanent Representative of Malta
to the United Nations, 25 June 2026

Thank you President,

I wish to start by thanking Colombia for convening this important debate. I would also like to thank SRSG Frazier, UNICEF, and the CSO briefer for their insightful yet sobering briefings.

Malta aligns itself with the statements delivered by the European Union and the Group of Friends of CAAC.

President,

Malta reiterates its unwavering support for the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms Vanessa Frazier, and for the indispensable work carried out by her Office. We reaffirm the importance of preserving the independence, impartiality and credibility of the mandate and of its monitoring and reporting functions.

We further underscore the importance of ensuring that the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is able to fulfil its mandate by translating monitoring and reporting into timely, concrete recommendations and follow-up action.

President,

Malta remains appalled by the scale and severity of grave violations committed against children in conflict situations, which in 2025 affected the highest number of children recorded since the establishment of the CAAC mandate.

The Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Myanmar, and Somalia recorded the highest numbers of verified violations in 2025, underlining the urgent need for greater protection of children and full compliance with international humanitarian law.

We remain deeply concerned by the continued suffering of children as a result of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including attacks affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as the unlawful transfer and deportation of children. We support continued efforts to secure their safe return, recovery and reintegration.

We are also alarmed by the continued deterioration of the situation in Haiti, where escalating gang violence has resulted in a sharp increase in violence against children.

Of particular concern is the fact that, in 2025, Government forces were responsible for a significant proportion of verified grave violations against children, including killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access. This trend reflects a troubling erosion of respect for international humanitarian law and the special protections afforded to children and underscores the urgent need to move from condemnation to



sustained engagement, prevention, accountability and compliance with international humanitarian law.

We urge all parties listed in the Secretary-General's report to engage constructively with the United Nations and to develop and implement action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children.

It is in this spirit that we welcome the ongoing engagement between the United Nations and parties to conflict, including discussions aimed at advancing child protection commitments, in Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. We also welcome that more than 13,100 children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups received protection or reintegration support in 2025.

President,

Sustaining progress requires continued investment in child protection capacities across the conflict cycle. We recall Security Council resolution 2764, on the importance of maintaining child protection capacities during peace operation transitions and ensuring that child protection remains integrated across conflict prevention, peacebuilding and recovery efforts.

Yet the figures before us today show that commitments and frameworks are not enough unless they result in tangible protection for children on the ground.



In this context:

Malta condemns all attacks on and abuse of children in armed conflict. Children are disproportionately affected by these violations, with girls bearing the greatest burden of conflict-related sexual violence and boys disproportionately affected by recruitment and use. Malta urges all parties to conflict to comply with their obligations under international law, and calls for investment in age-sensitive, gender-responsive and survivor-centred support, while urging governments to prioritize prevention, ensure accountability, and pursue justice for survivors.

Malta also denounces the denial of humanitarian access and is alarmed by the killing of hundreds of humanitarian workers in conflict settings in 2025. We call on all parties to ensure rapid, safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access and to respect and protect humanitarian personnel in accordance with international law.

We further call upon all parties to conflict to protect schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure. We urge all States to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration and uphold Security Council Resolution 2601. We also reaffirm our commitment to the Paris Principles, the Vancouver Principles, and the Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.



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President,

In conclusion, as we mark 30 years of the CAAC mandate, Malta reaffirms its full support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, her Office and the United Nations mechanisms established to protect children affected by armed conflict. The findings of the latest Secretary-General's response serve as a warning. We cannot allow the rules designed to protect children to be ignored, weakened or violated with impunity. Malta therefore, calls on all Member States to renew, with urgency, our collective commitment to stronger protections and more concrete action for children affected by armed conflict. Failure to do so comes at an unacceptable cost for children and for future generations. The credibility of the international legal order depends on our willingness to uphold and enforce the rules we have collectively agreed to protect children in times of war.

Thank you.