



**KINGDOM OF BELGIUM**

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National statement delivered by

Gilles BAUWENS, Counsellor

**UNGA 78**

**THIRD COMMITTEE**

**Item 67: Rights of children**

**Interactive dialogue with the SRSG Violence Against Children**

New York, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

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Special Representative,

Belgium thanks you for your report. Violence against children remains one of the most reprehensible problems in our world.

We welcome the focus in your latest report on child protection challenges in the context of travel and tourism. This is of course not a new challenge but we agree with your assessment that the post COVID-19 recovery phase is a good moment to focus on the issue. We also agree that child protection is a crucial element of the ambition, as set out by the 2030 Agenda, to make travel and tourism truly sustainable.

We are deeply concerned about the sexual exploitation, child labour, human trafficking and other forms of violence against children that continue to exist in the context of travel and tourism. Belgium is fully aware of the challenges described in your report and has in the recent past invested in ways to respond to and prevent violence against children in the context of travel and tourism, particularly sexual exploitation. One example are the campaigns implemented by our embassy network to increase awareness with travelers and encourage extreme vigilance for cases of sexual exploitation of children.

A particularly relevant instrument in this context is the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Unfortunately, no less than 50 initial reports to the Committee on the Rights on the Child on the implementation of this protocol are overdue. We call upon the States concerned to submit their reports as soon as possible.

Thank you.