



## KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

H.E. Philippe KRIDELKA, Permanent Representative of  
Belgium to the United Nations

### **Security Council High-Level Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict**

New York, 28/6/2021

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Ms. President,

I thank the briefers for their insightful remarks. Belgium aligns itself with the statements of the **European Union** and the **Group of Friends** of Children and Armed Conflict.

We congratulate Norway for the excellent work it has done during the first six months of its mandate. The CAAC Working Group is in able hands.

Belgium welcomes the annual report and expresses its deepest concern at the high amount of grave violations verified by the UN. In particular we are concerned at the dramatic increases in abduction and sexual violence.

Ms. President,

I wish to make **three points on behalf of Belgium**. They concern (1) the mainstreaming of the CAAC agenda across the work of the UN system, (2) the importance of dedicated child protection capacity in UN missions and (3) the central role of accountability in preventing violations against children affected by armed conflict.

First, the importance of **mainstreaming the CAAC agenda**. We expect the Security Council to pay due attention to child protection in its mandating and sanctioning decisions and we expect the Fifth Committee to follow through by providing the necessary resources. The conclusions of the CAAC Working Group need systematic follow up both in New York and in the field. We call for the wide dissemination and use of the Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict.

We further call upon all parties to armed conflict to fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law. We also encourage Member states to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and endorse and

implement the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles with a view to strengthening the protection of children.

Secondly, Belgium emphasizes the importance of **dedicated child protection capacity in UN missions**. There is no substitute for the specialized expertise of child protection advisors. They are the eyes and ears of the CAAC mandate on the ground. We call for sufficient resources in this regard, both in UN field operations and at the UN secretariat, and we encourage strengthened regional partnerships on children and armed conflict, for example with the European Union and the African Union.

My third point concerns **accountability**. Belgium supports the Secretary-General's call to strengthen national accountability measures for violations against children and for strengthened cooperation with international accountability mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court. States have an obligation to end impunity for grave violations against children. To further strengthen the synergies between the ICC and the CAAC mandate Belgium organized a meeting for the members of the Security Council in which SRSG Gamba and the ICC Prosecutor briefed last November.

Another powerful instrument for accountability is the **listing of parties** to conflict by the Secretary-General which should be credible, objective and evidence-based. The work of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, which continued during the COVID-19-pandemic, has been exemplary.

On our side, child protection will continue to be a **horizontal priority for Belgium**. We are proud to support the Office of the SRSG for CAAC to fulfill its essential mandate. We also support UNICEF's CAAC Monitoring and Reporting activities, on top of our core funding to UNICEF which amounts to 15 mio EUR/year. This will assist the documentation and verification of grave violations. And finally we are mobilizing our diplomatic network in conflict affected areas to raise awareness and improve the follow up of CAAC priorities by local partners.

I conclude by expressing my **deepest gratitude to SRSG Gamba, and to all child protection actors**, be it within the UN system, national authorities or civil society, for their dedication to protecting children. This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CAAC mandate, and while the challenges remain formidable, I believe we have jointly played an important role in improving child protection in conflict areas.

Thank you.