



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

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

25th Anniversary of the Children and Armed Conflict mandate

New York, 18/01/2022

Ms. President,
Ms. Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict,

Thank you for presenting the study on the CAAC mandate, to which Belgium proudly contributed. Thank you to the previous speakers, particularly Aisha for highlighting the importance of girls' education in the Sahel. Belgium aligns itself with the statements of the **European Union**.

Ms. President,

I would like to seize the occasion of the **25th anniversary** of the CAAC mandate to **congratulate** Ms. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and her entire team, for their **relentless work to protect children**.

Since the creation of the mandate, millions of children have directly or indirectly **benefited from enhanced protection**. However, another **250 million** currently live in conflict-affected areas and are at great risk of acts of violence committed by **perpetrators who aren't properly held accountable**.

Accountability is key to ensure children's protection from armed forces and groups and I would like to underline three points in this regard: (1) the need for continued support to the **monitoring and reporting mechanism** (MRM); (2) the critical importance of integrating child protection into **judicial tools** and enhanced cooperation with the International Criminal Court and (3) the governments' adherence to **international norms**.

First, it is important to emphasize that without **data from the field**, accountability is impossible. The **CAAC Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism** is the principal accountability mechanism that records incidences of violations against children affected by armed conflict and we thank the MRM

staff for their commitment and professionalism in tracking CAAC violations. However, resources are scarce and this is why Belgium recently allocated **2 million euros to UNICEF** for monitoring and reporting cases of children and armed conflict. We encourage others to follow suit.

Second, it is essential to recognize that children are particularly vulnerable victims of armed conflict. Unfortunately, today, children still do not occupy their rightful place in judicial proceedings. We therefore call for children to be systematically recognized as a **category of victims in their own right** within transitional justice mechanisms, and in the various national and international courts. Furthermore, we call for **enhanced cooperation with international mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court**. To this end, Belgium organized an informal session between the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court at the end of 2020 and participated in a side-event last month on a child-centred approach at the ICC and beyond.

Finally, for the fight against impunity to be on every stakeholders' agenda, **existing international norms** must be fully implemented. We call on all parties to conflicts to fully respect their obligations under human rights, international humanitarian law and refugee law. We also encourage Member States to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Vancouver and Paris Principles, and to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration to strengthen our collective action.

Ms. President,

I commend the Special Representative, and all of her predecessors, for all the **achievements of the 25 first years of the mandate**. CAAC really does represent the UN at its best. Belgium will continue to mobilize in support of the mandate, starting today with the dissemination of the study. I conclude by thanking the co-organizers and I wish Norway the very best for the continuation of its presidency of the Security Council's CAAC Working Group.

Thank you.