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Intervention at

**UNSC Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict:
'How to Prevent and Respond to Grave Violations against
Children and Armed Conflict'**

New York, 05/07/2023

Max. 3 minutes

Madame la Présidente,

La Belgique s'associe aux déclarations de l'Union européenne et du Groupe des Amis de CAAC.

Je souhaiterais commencer mon intervention en réitérant le **soutien indéfectible** de la Belgique au mandat enfants et conflits armés et à la Représentante spéciale du Secrétaire général, ainsi qu'au « **Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism** » d'UNICEF que mon pays soutient financièrement.

Ce processus de collecte de données constitue la véritable colonne vertébrale du mandat. Il lui confère sa crédibilité, et il forme une base solide pour l'adoption de plans de prévention et de plans d'action avec les parties au conflit. Ces plans sont des outils clés pour protéger efficacement les enfants touchés par des conflits.

Quand les outils CAAC, tels que le MRM, sont utilisés efficacement et que l'intégrité et l'impartialité du mécanisme d'inscription sur les listes en annexes du rapport annuel sont respectées, le mandat peut sauver les vies des plus vulnérables face aux conflits, celles des enfants.

Nous soutenons l'appel du Secrétaire général à adopter une approche de *mainstreaming* de la **protection de l'enfance** dans tous les mandats et toutes les activités onusiennes liés à la mitigation des conflits.

Mrs President,

Belgium welcomes the latest **SG report** on Children and Armed Conflict. We share the SG's concern about the scale and severity of grave violations against children in so many places around the world. Allow me to expand on a few country situations.

Belgium remains deeply concerned by the dire situation of children in **Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory**. The increasing level of violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is troubling. We condemn the excessive use of force by Israeli security forces, resulting in an unacceptably high number of Palestinian children killed or maimed. Belgium is also gravely

concerned by the continuing increase of children detained by Israel and the reports about ill-treatment of children during detention. We echo the SG's call to adopt and implement clear and time-bound commitments to end and prevent any more violations against children by all parties, and we support the SG's request to strengthen and broaden the UNSC Working Group on CAAC to cover Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

This year again, the number of verified grave violations committed by non-state armed groups against children in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, especially in North Kivu, is appalling. Belgium encourages the government of the DRC to continue its efforts to implement its Action Plan, and we echo the SG's call to prioritize the fight against sexual violence, which remains an issue of grave concern in the DRC, also when it comes to the Congolese armed forces.

Belgium welcomes the listing of the Russian armed forces and their affiliates in **Ukraine**. A swift and drastic reduction in children's casualties should be an absolute priority. We particularly share the SG's deep concern about the high numbers of attacks against schools and hospitals, and about the transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia. Family tracing and reunification, with the help of United Nations entities, should be a priority.

Belgium regrets that the gravity and number of violations by armed groups in **Niger** called for the country to be added as a situation of concern. We call on the SRSG, in close cooperation with the authorities of Niger, to look into ways on how to strengthen the already existing efforts to prevent a further deterioration of the situation.

Finally, Belgium is deeply concerned by the lack of meaningful improvement of the situation of children in **Afghanistan**. We support the SG's call on the Taliban and all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children.

President,

While the numbers of grave violations against children in the SG's report are just the tip of the iceberg, they are once again unbearable. The work to prevent violations against children worldwide remains vast – yet we all agree that we should protect children from conflict. Let us work together to safeguard and strengthen the CAAC mandate as it's more important than ever.

I thank you.