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Immediate Measures to Protect Children and Civilians in Armed Conflict and Ensure their Access to Emergency Relief

Report of the UA-MUNC Secretary-General

Introduction:

1. As of December 2014, an unprecedented 38 million individuals were internally displaced as a result of armed conflict. In fact, in 2014 alone, 11 million people were uprooted from their homes. This statistic is equivalent to 30,000 people daily, a record-setting number in the category of displaced individuals in any given year. It should also be noted that the average length of displacement is 17 years.¹ In addition to displaced civilians, armed conflict has also given rise to an alarming increase in civilian deaths: during the 20th century, percentages rose from 5% to 90%.² More recently, on April 4th, 2017, the Syrian government allegedly deployed chemical weapons, killing at least 70 civilians and injuring many more. This constitutes the largest chemical weapons attack in Asia since 2013³. Unfortunately, these statistics are only a handful of figures representing the devastating human cost inflicted by armed conflict. This Council's topic is one of the world's greatest challenges in the 21st century, yet it continues to be under-addressed. With this great challenge, however, comes great opportunity for Member States to ensure that the 1.4 billion children and civilians living in conflict-affected regions are spared from the devastating effects of war.⁴ The crucial issues of "immediate measures to protect children and civilians in armed conflict and ensure their access to emergency relief", must be addressed by the central organ of the United Nations, the Security Council.

¹ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1517112.pdf>

² <https://www.unicef.org/graca/patterns.htm>

³ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56504#.W0gRgktfUds>

⁴ OECD, *Report on States of Fragility*, 2015



Introduction to the Council, Jurisdiction and Mandate

1. As laid out by the United Nations Charter, the Security Council is one of the six main organs of the United Nations. Since 1946, the UNSC has had primary responsibility over the maintenance of international peace and security. Additionally, the Council is entitled to developing constructive partnerships and providing a platform to debate and potentially harmonize the actions of Member States. Composed of five permanent members, and ten elected non-permanent members, the Council aims to “cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights”. Finally, the Council can make recommendations to the General Assembly for the appointment of the Secretary-General, the election of judges to the International Court of Justice, and the admission of states wishing to join or be recognized by the United Nations.

2. The Council has jurisdiction over all Member States, and Member States have the obligation to legally comply with decisions taken by this body. In the case of conflict, the Council calls upon all parties to settle their disputes peacefully. Based on the Council’s investigations, the UNSC provides possible terms of settlement such as special envoys, dispatch missions, and the use of the Secretary-General’s offices. As a secondary measure, the Council can issue ceasefire directives and deploy peacekeeping forces. Moreover, it is within the power of the Council to impose sanctions such as financial restrictions, arms embargoes and travel bans. The UNSC may also encourage severing diplomatic relations with aggressor nations, introduce blockades, and authorize the use of collective military action.⁵

3. In order to increase their legitimacy and responsiveness to the needs of the international community, Council members strive to adopt their decisions unanimously. In fact, it is crucial to note that the Security Council’s main form of adopting resolutions is by consensus. According to statistics, in 2016, 67 out of 77 resolutions in the UNSC were passed by consensus.⁶ If consensus is not achieved, resolutions need at least nine total votes and no negative votes from the five permanent members to be adopted. The Presidency of the Council rotates monthly between its members, and will be held by Uruguay in May 2017.⁷

⁵ <http://www.un.org/en/sc/about/>

⁶ http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2017-02/the_security_council_in_2016.php

⁷ <http://www.un.org/en/sc/presidency/>



Topic Background

Children, civilians, armed conflict and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

4. “There can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development”.⁸ Armed conflict deprives societies of peace, justice and security. It can also lead to the stagnation and recession of development efforts, most of which is accumulated through decades of hard work and resources. War can plunge entire nations into vicious cycles of violence, poverty, lack of opportunity, and the perpetuation of more violence. In fact, 42% of the world’s impoverished population lives in conflict-affected areas. If this trend continues at today’s pace, this number will rise to 62% by the year 2030.⁹

5. Furthermore, the protection of civilians (particularly youth) from the consequences of armed conflict is a challenge. Over a third of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) either explicitly or implicitly focus on the well-being and empowerment of youth. The protection of civilians and adolescents in conflict zones is key to achieving peaceful, just and inclusive societies, as stated in SDG 16. Therefore, the protection of children and civilians is a crucial step for the implementation of sustainable development overall.¹⁰ The 2030 Agenda represents an ambitious response to global challenges, and peace for children and civilians is critical to achieving the SDGs.

The topic can be divided into three main components: children in armed conflict, civilians in armed conflict, and ensuring access to emergency relief.

⁸ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/sdgs/>

⁹ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/sdgs/>

¹⁰ UNDP, *Fast Facts: Youth and Peacebuilding*, 2015



CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

6. As Miss Graça Machel, UN independent expert on children and armed conflict, stated in 1996: “War violates every right of a child – the right to life, the right to be with family and be nurtured and respected. It is unforgivable that children are assaulted, violated, murdered and yet our conscience is not revolted or our sense of dignity, challenged”.¹¹ Protecting children from the effects of armed conflict is both a legal responsibility and a moral imperative, because children are disproportionately affected by war.

Magnitude of the Problem

7. Today, children represent nearly half the world’s population affected by conflict.¹² Over 600 million children and youth live in conflict-affected territories.¹³ In the past decade alone, 2 million children lost their lives in 36 countries affected by armed conflict. Within the same timespan, over 1 million children were orphaned, and over 6 million were severely injured or permanently disabled. Another 10 million children were psychologically traumatized as a result of their experiences in war.¹⁴ However, today, post-conflict relief for children is not regarded as a priority, resulting in insufficient support and protection.

8. Armed conflict stunts all aspects of a child’s development. Not only can children be uprooted from their communities and become internally displaced children (IDCs), they can also be separated from their families. Those living in conflict areas are often stripped of food, shelter, and medical aid. The lack of access to human necessities can have lasting and detrimental effects on the development of children. Children can be deprived of their education, making job prospects less likely. Furthermore, they may be coerced to witness or take part in atrocities, often against their own families and communities, provoking profound psychological distress and mental illness.

Children associated with Armed Forces

9. Although estimates differ, around 250,000 children are believed to be associated with armed forces, most aged between 14 and 18 years old. Some are even as young as 7 and can be trafficked into funding and sustaining military activity.¹⁵ It is important to note that children play various roles in armed forces, not limited to acting as child soldiers. They are also used as mine layers, porters, cooks, lookouts, messengers etc., and these roles can equally expose them to enormous risk and hardship. In addition, girls are often used as “wives” for militia members. Children become attractive targets due to their unsuspecting appearance, physical vulnerability and ability to be manipulated and indoctrinated. However, some children may ‘voluntarily’ join, seeking to defend their communities, escape poverty, or ‘free’ themselves from a feeling of revenge against injustice committed against them, or their families.¹⁶ In most cases, children are unpaid and forced to do abhorrent tasks. Although this is more common in non-governmental

¹¹ <https://www.unicef.org/graca/summry.htm>

¹² <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/sdgs/>

¹³ http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Youth/UNDP_Youth-Strategy-2014-17_Web.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.child-soldier.org>

¹⁵ https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/FactSheet100601Final_E_100603_.pdf

¹⁶ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/effects-of-conflict/six-grave-violations/child-soldiers/>



armed forces, some states also do not enforce regulations against the involvement of children in armed groups.

The Six Grave Violations

10. In light of these aforementioned tragedies, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict identified the following “Six Grave Violations”:

- a. Recruitment or use of children by armed militias: Soldiers under the age of 15 cannot be recruited, and those under 18 cannot participate in hostilities.¹⁷ Those states allowing voluntary recruitment under these ages must include strict safeguards. This is the most common out of all the violations.¹⁸
- b. Killing and maiming of children: This violates the principles of proportionality and distinction under international humanitarian law. Examples of this violation include torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
- c. Sexual violence against children: This includes rape, forced prostitution and pregnancy, sexual slavery, enforced sterilization and even forced marriage, which propels the contraction of diseases such as HIV. When used to target children in reprisal campaigns to humiliate communities, sexual violence can exacerbate conflict. The importance of this violation is recognized by Security Council resolutions 1888, 1960 and 2106. Boys can also face trauma by witnessing or perpetrating sexual violence, and may be forced to commit rapes either directly – by their commanders – or indirectly – under peer pressure.¹⁹
- d. Attacks against schools or hospitals: This breaches the paramount significance of a child’s right to health and education. Schools and hospitals serve as civilian institutions providing shelter and care, and therefore are not legitimate military targets. In 2015, 19 out of the 20 nations listed in the annex of the Secretary-General’s Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict included schools and hospitals as sites attacked, particularly due to the increasing use of explosive weapons and airstrikes.²⁰
- e. Abduction of children: This violation is a threat that is currently on the rise, subjecting children to brutal treatment. It can amount to forced displacement or the deportation of children. Most alarmingly, abduction can aid the perpetration of other violations, such as recruitment for use in armed militias, enslavement and trafficking, killing and maiming, as well as sexual violence.
- f. Denial of humanitarian access for children. This violates the right of children to survival and to be free from hunger.²¹ This also breaches international humanitarian law.

11. Each violation mentioned above constitutes grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, as well as customary international law. These principles are

¹⁷ UN Convention on the Rights of Child; Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions

¹⁸ https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/15-18739_Children-in-Conflict_FINAL-WEB.pdf

¹⁹ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/effects-of-conflict/six-grave-violations/sexual-violence/>

²⁰ https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/15-18739_Children-in-Conflict_FINAL-WEB.pdf

²¹ https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/WorkingPaper-1_SixGraveViolationsLegalFoundation.pdf



universally applicable to both state and non-state militias in all nations. The violations listed serve as triggers to include parties in the annex of the Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict²².

12. Over the past several years, the world has witnessed some worrisome trends with regards to the above Six Grave Violations. In Somalia, for instance, a 50% increase in violations against children was recorded. In Syria, where civil war has been raging for over six years, and in Iraq, over 1,500 cases of great violations were reported in 2015 alone. In the Lake Chad Region, Boko Haram used 21 girls as suicide bombers, and an estimated 1.3 million children were uprooted from their homes. In Yemen, a five-fold increase in the number of children recruited and a six-fold increase in children killed and maimed was reported.²³

The Problem with Reintegration

13. Even if children associated with armed groups are demobilized and rehabilitated after armed conflict, reintegration is a difficult process, as these children are regarded with fear and distrust. Their association with armed groups causes them to live in isolated conditions and be blamed for the catastrophes experienced by communities. Stigmas associated with girls who previously served in militias are especially problematic. They quickly become isolated due to (forceful) relationships with fighters and even children born out of rape. Therefore, the Council should consider the different needs faced by both genders to provide effective demobilization and reintegration processes.

Limitations to Education

14. The threats posed by armed conflict result in distrust with respect to sending children to school, especially when schools become popular sites of attack. This leads to soaring dropout rates and 20% lower enrolment rates, particularly among girls, whose education becomes less of a priority when faced with unstable political and economic conditions. Furthermore, less than 1% of youth accesses tertiary education after becoming refugees. In the first two years of the Syrian conflict, for instance, over 1.8 million children left school, erasing substantial progress in education in the country. In contrast, studies have shown that access to education can decrease the likelihood of armed conflict. If the percentage of youth accessing secondary education were to rise from 30 to 60% in countries with a high youth to adult population ratio, the risk of conflict would be halved.²⁴

²² https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/WorkingPaper-1_SixGraveViolationsLegalFoundation.pdf

²³ https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/15-18739_Children-in-Conflict_FINAL-WEB.pdf, 2015-2016 figures

²⁴ UNESCO, 2014



CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT

15. The targeting of civilians in armed conflict has reached shocking levels over the past decade. Civilians can be killed and maimed in both targeted and indiscriminate military attacks. They can be tortured, taken hostage, forced to join armed militias, used as human shields, stripped of necessities, and made victims of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial executions and sexual violence. Civilians are also commonly displaced from their homes.²⁵ In short, the most basic rules of international humanitarian law are violated daily. Civilians trapped in armed conflict are among the most vulnerable in the world, despite their right to be protected.

Distinction and Proportionality

16. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols lay out two key pillars in the law of armed conflict: those of “distinction” and “proportionality”. These two principles aim to protect civilians from all ‘collateral damage’. On the one hand, the principle of distinction ensures that all parties to a conflict distinguish between civilians and combatants, and that civilians must not be the targets of attacks. On the other hand, the principle of proportionality prohibits military attacks resulting in disproportionate civilian deaths or injuries, or disproportionate damage to civilian buildings. On numerous occasions, the Security Council has strongly condemned “the deliberate targeting of civilians or other protected persons in situations of armed conflict”, which may amount to genocide and crimes against humanity.²⁶

Effects of Armed Conflict on Civilian Populations

17. In 2014, Afghanistan suffered over 10,500 civilian casualties, a significant number of which were caused by explosive weapons. There was also a 40% increase in child casualties. In Iraq, 12,000 civilians were killed and 23,000 were injured in the same year. All parties to the conflict have allegedly perpetrated ethnically motivated and sectarian abuse. In Syria, over 220,000 civilians were killed and over 1 million injured from 2011 to 2014, partly due to the reported use of chemical weapons.²⁷ As Syria enters its sixth year of conflict, over 11.3 million civilians have been displaced, amounting to half of its population.²⁸ In Somalia, conflict resulted in 1 million internally displaced persons facing challenges such as discrimination, forced eviction and sexual violence. The rise of Boko Haram has also resulted in the displacement of 2.3 million civilians in the Lake Chad region between May 2013 and April 2016. But this trend is not exclusive to the Middle East or Africa. In eastern Ukraine, 600,000 civilians were forced to leave their homes.²⁹

²⁵ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1517112.pdf>

²⁶ Security Council Resolution 1882

²⁷ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1517112.pdf>

²⁸ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/children-of-syria-by-the-numbers/>

²⁹ <http://www.unhcr.org/internally-displaced-people.html>



EMERGENCY RELIEF

18. Emergency relief plays a critical role in the well-being of populations during conflict. However, in recent years, attacks on healthcare personnel and medical facilities have unfortunately become a feature of armed conflict. This causes the unravelling of entire health systems, which results in devastating impacts on affected populations in conflict, as it limits their access to humanitarian aid and healthcare. The decimation of healthcare systems makes it more difficult to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals that entitle people to essential medical services. Member States must bear in mind that it is not only the bullets and bombs that kill and maim children and civilians. The insufficient basic medical care available is also responsible for many civilian casualties.

Importance of Emergency Relief

19. Over the past decade, the number of people in need of international humanitarian assistance has tripled, and an overwhelming 80% of this demographic has been affected by armed conflict.³⁰ Under international law, all parties in a conflict must work to allow aid to reach civilian populations. This delivery must be conducted without distinction based on age, gender or ethnicity, or any other personal characteristics.³¹

Attacks against Humanitarian Aid Facilities and Personnel

20. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, over 1,800 threats of violence or violent attacks affecting healthcare delivery were reported between 2012 and 2013.³² According to the World Health Organization, Syria witnessed 71 attacks on both existing and emergency healthcare facilities in 2016. Over 100 health facilities in Yemen have been damaged since the escalation of conflict in March 2016. In 2014, five Save the Children workers in Afghanistan and 18 humanitarian personnel in the Central African Republic were abducted and murdered. As of today, the United Nations remains an important supplier and operator in humanitarian relief operations worldwide. Security Council resolutions have regularly condemned attacks against both UN and independent humanitarian relief workers, which violate the Fourth Geneva Convention. The lack of humanitarian aid is dire, with 80,000 Syrian children believed to be carrying polio. This regresses the progress made in Syria's health care system, as this disease had been previously eradicated by 1995.³³

Blocking of Free Passage to Humanitarian Aid

21. The blocking of free passage or timely delivery of emergency relief to civilians takes place for several reasons: political motivations, security-related issues, fighting, extortions, and threats. The Security Council has strongly condemned impeding the delivery of relief supplies to civilian populations. International humanitarian law requires that all humanitarian personnel be granted adequate access to refugee and displaced populations. The Geneva Conventions also provide special protection to humanitarian relief personnel, equipment and buildings. Parties to

³⁰ <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1517112.pdf>

³¹ Articles 23 and 55 of the IV Geneva Convention and Customary Rule 55 in the International Committee of the Red Cross

³² *Report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1517112.pdf>

³³ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/children-of-syria-by-the-numbers/>



conflict must grant freedom of movement to these humanitarian organizations.³⁴ This is a key challenge for Member States, particularly in non-government controlled areas, where insecurity and fear of violent extremism reign. The United Nations holds a unique leveraging position to negotiate the free passage of humanitarian aid. Nevertheless, many parties have ignored UN efforts. The United Nations currently does not control several humanitarian corridors designated by individual nations, such as that of Aleppo.³⁵

Past UN Actions

22. Since the United Nations was founded in 1945, conflict has always been at the forefront of its agenda. In fact, the preamble of the UN Charter aims to save future generations from the “scourge of war” which has “brought untold sorrow to mankind”.³⁶

Past UN Actions regarding Children and Armed Conflict

23. One of the most prominent foundations of the protection of children in armed conflict is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the first legally binding international document that enshrines the rights of children worldwide. Ratified by 193 nations, it secures children’s rights to life, survival, protection against violence, full development, and safety from abuse, among other things.³⁷ The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict also lays out the minimum age of eighteen for participation in armed conflict.³⁸

24. The ‘Zero Under 18’ campaign was launched by Leila Zerrougui, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. This campaign promotes the ratification of the Optional Protocol. However, the campaign came to an end in 2012, with 31 states failing to ratify.³⁹ Despite this progress, Member States must continue to advocate for the universal ratification of international accords. These agreements are built upon international and customary humanitarian law, and will prove a great asset in increasing the legitimacy of resolutions.

25. In addition, reports by Graça Machel concluded in General Assembly resolution A/51/30, which set the UN Agenda on Children in armed Conflict, provided the first multifaceted assessment of violations suffered by children.

26. Other past international action to protect children in armed conflict include the Cape Town Principles and Best Practices on the Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces, the Paris Principles, the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, and International Labour Organization Convention 182. Prominent Security Council documents include Resolution 1460, which calls for the establishment of time-bound action plans. These constitute a commitment to take concrete measures to end violations of children’s and civilians’ rights in armed conflict.⁴⁰

27. Each year, the Secretary-General produces a report on Children and Armed Conflict, listing parties responsible for any of the Six Grave Violations, which induces pressure on

³⁴ Article 49 of the IV Geneva Convention

³⁵ <http://www.france24.com/en/20160729-un-asks-take-control-aleppo-humanitarian-corridors>

³⁶ <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/preamble/index.html>

³⁷ https://www.unicef.org/rightsite/237_202.htm

³⁸ https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/index_childsoldiers.html

³⁹ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/mandate/country-status-2/>

⁴⁰ https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Children-in-Conflict_WEB.pdf



violating groups. However, certain conflict zones receive more attention than others, while some are not included in the report.

28. Finally, in 2005, the Security Council established the unprecedented Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, which systematically monitors incidences of the Six Grave Violations by all parties. The mechanism also provides country-specific reports of the situation in nations listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict.

Past UN Action regarding Civilians in Armed Conflict

29. The 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) protects the right of civilians in conflict. The Rome Statute established the ICC to bring perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity to justice.⁴¹ The Fourth Geneva Convention contains the rules limiting the brutality of war, protecting civilians, humanitarian workers and doctors. Its Common Article 3 addresses non-international armed conflict, demanding the humane treatment of all persons in enemy hands, forbidding mutilation, murder, abduction, torture and cruel and humiliating punishment. The Convention also introduces the principles of distinction and proportionality. Ratified by 194 States, its terms are universally applicable.⁴²

30. On the other hand, the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1997 prohibit attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects, forbidding the forced movement of civilians. Unfortunately, parties to conflict have violated these principles, for which their enforcement will be crucial to the protection of civilians.

31. Other past actions include the UN Declaration of Human Rights, which highlights the right to life, liberty and security.⁴³ Finally, in 2005, all Member States met at the World Summit to adopt the "Responsibility to Protect", a principle committing them to collectively prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and respond when a party is 'manifestly failing' to do so.⁴⁴

32. The Council has also issued a series of cross-cutting reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, an important step in the monitoring of the situation of civilians in armed conflict.⁴⁵

Past UN Actions regarding Emergency Relief

33. In terms of emergency relief, Resolution 2286 strongly condemns attacks against healthcare and humanitarian personnel and impunity. It underlines the role of education in international humanitarian law in order to prevent such attacks.⁴⁶ Resolution 2175 condemns violence and intimidation against parties involved in humanitarian operations.⁴⁷ Finally, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs has ensured vast improvements in the coordination of humanitarian affairs within UN agencies and with governments.

⁴¹ http://legal.un.org/icc/statute/99_corr/cstatute.htm

⁴² <https://www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm>

⁴³ <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

⁴⁴ <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgresponsibility.shtml>

⁴⁵ <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/cross-cutting-report/protection-of-civilians-in-armed-conflict-1.php>

⁴⁶ http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2016-09/protection_of_civilians_8.php

⁴⁷ <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/protection-of-civilians/>



Key Players in the Security Council

34. In addition to actions taken by the Security Council, individual members of the Council have taken measures to alleviate the situation of children and civilians in armed conflict. For instance, France has highlighted the essential role played by UN peacekeeping operations in the protection of civilians. Its commitment to improving the effectiveness of peacekeeping, and the promotion of international humanitarian law, has been reflected in its organization of high-level open debates on this topic during their Council presidency.⁴⁸ While the European Union currently funds several processes to restore and maintain peace, including those in Somalia, other donors must be found in order to secure fund sustainability. This view is shared by Kazakhstan, who has advocated for the identification of resources to strengthen technical and financial support, as well as training for UN missions that help combat instability. Egypt has sponsored counter-terrorism actions, especially in neighbouring nations, where strong regional and international efforts are required. Senegal has encouraged security sector reforms in the midst of the use of children as combatants and attacks directed towards humanitarian personnel. Together with Sweden, Senegal has also applauded attention to financial resources that seek to achieve more sustainable and predictable funding to ensure the efficiency of peacebuilding and development efforts. In addition, Italy has expressed views favouring the prevention of conflict by tackling violence through the promotion of education and opportunity.

35. Ethiopia has aided the facilitation of easy-access corridors to nations like Somalia by allowing UNICEF to purchase supplies from local markets. Similarly, Japan has donated \$26 million as emergency humanitarian assistance funds, in addition to their \$22 million contribution in January 2017 that focused on building security capabilities. The United States, supported by Bolivia, has supported the elimination of bureaucratic blockage for the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid, thereby encouraging joint planning between the UN and regional bodies.^[32] Ukraine has a special position of leverage, as it is the only current Council member struggling with armed conflict, and it has been unable to deliver humanitarian assistance to non-government-controlled areas.

36. China has shown appreciation for finding regional solutions to regional conflict, where synergies among parties are fostered, cooperation and capacity building are supported, and clear peacebuilding goals are identified. The United Kingdom has stressed the significance of political agreements between governments and non-state parties, as well as the importance of urging all parties to increment their efforts to provide emergency relief. Uruguay has supported the forging of agreements, particularly concerning areas in need of humanitarian assistance for civilians and children.

Further Past International Action

37. Nations including Egypt, Japan, New Zealand, Spain and Uruguay have sponsored resolutions promoting respect for healthcare during armed conflict.⁴⁹ In November 2014, Ukraine adopted a law on ensuring the rights and freedoms of internally displaced people, allowing assistance efforts to become more predictable.

38. Regional initiatives include the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, committing its parties to implement feasible measures for the protection of children and

⁴⁸ http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2016_503.pdf

⁴⁹ http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2016-09/protection_of_civilians_8.php



civilians in both international and internal armed conflict, as well as in situations of political instability⁵⁰. The European Union has developed a series of Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict.⁵¹ The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has worked alongside the Ukrainian and Russian governments to help monitor the civilian situation in Eastern Europe and foster ceasefire deals.⁵²

39. The International Criminal Court has served as a key body in ensuring accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Furthermore, it has punished numerous criminals such as Dominic Ongwen from the Lord's Resistance Army, who abducted as many as 100,000 children in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda.⁵³ Another example is that of Germain Katanga, accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to an attack in Bogoro, a village in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the International Criminal Court does not try all criminals violating international law against children and civilians, and the trial process often takes place long after the atrocities have been committed.

40. Non-governmental organizations such as the Centre for Civilians in Conflict, harness the efforts of policymakers, military officials, UN bodies and civilians, in order to prioritize the protection of civilians in armed conflict.⁵⁵ Organizations dedicated to humanitarian relief are numerous, and some of the most prominent NGOs include the International Committee of the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, Oxfam, CARE, and Save the Children. They play a crucial role in the implementation of solutions, extend help to the affected populations and spread awareness about conflict-affected areas. Many NGOs often go where few key players will. However, Member States must bear in mind that NGOs' funds and outreach is finite, and that they are not intended to replace the role of the Security Council.

What issues persist despite UN action?

41. Persisting issues include non-state armed groups' lack of compliance with international law. For instance, eight non-state forces were listed in the annex of the Secretary-General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict.

42. Another issue deterring UN action is the failure of Member States to deliver on their Responsibility to Protect. A lack of awareness among civilians and public officials ensures that children and civilians remain invisible victims and do not propel governments to action. This, added to power vacuums and widespread impunity that perpetrate the cycle of violations, are key issues the Council needs to address.

43. Lack of funding also hinders UN action. In northeast Nigeria, for instance, an estimated 90% of displaced families are sheltered by several of the world's poorest communities, straining finite resources. This is partially due to the lack of viable funding campaigns. In 2015, for instance, UNICEF only received 44% of the required funding for humanitarian aid in the Lake Chad Region.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/child/#a22>

⁵¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/GuidelinesChildren.pdf>

⁵² <http://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine>

⁵³ https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/world/africa/dominic-ongwen-uganda-rebel-hague-icc.html?_r=0

⁵⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/03/drc-all-you-need-know-about-historic-case-against-germain-katanga/>

⁵⁵ <http://civiliansinconflict.org>

⁵⁶ https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Beyond_Chibok.pdf



44. Furthermore, although international law clearly stipulates that peace agreements or official demobilization processes are not necessary for the release of children, removing them from armed groups during times of conflict can prove difficult, as some children become used to 'living by the gun' and can be re-recruited numerous times.

45. Another key phenomenon is the significant gap within the humanitarian community regarding the collection of data on children and armed conflict. Violence and intimidation against health care workers restrict medical action. This, added to the lack of engagement with non-state armed groups and bureaucratic restrictions, are key factors preventing effective humanitarian action.

46. Finally, we must consider the challenge posed by variations in conditions of conflict, which makes it more difficult for the United Nations to develop a single strategy for every Member State.

Solutions Attempted in the Past

47. Since the adoption of Resolution 1460, time-bound action plans mandated by the Security Council have released over 115,000 children trapped in armed conflict. All governments targeted by the "Children, Not Soldiers" Campaign (Afghanistan, Chad, DR Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen) signed action plans, supervised by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, to prevent the recruitment of children. In fact, in 2015 alone, over 8,000 former child soldiers were released and reintegrated into society, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes have been introduced, yet efforts made by the Security Council need to be scaled up to allow for greater coverage.⁵⁷

48. Furthermore, the Security Council has used the large array of expert advice at its disposal. For example, it has formed assistance missions in several nations to help monitor humanitarian conditions in conflict-affected areas. It established the Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians and requested recommendations from the High Level Panel on Peace Operations. The Council has also opted to strengthen the protection and human rights mandates of numerous UN peace operations, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, with the aid of the Department of Field Support, has established the first UN policy on the protection of civilians, particularly during UN peacekeeping missions. Since 1999, the Council has been able to launch several peacekeeping operations, introducing protection-training courses targeted at civilian, military and police personnel, such as those of MINUSCA in the Central African Republic.⁵⁸ Tribunals including the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda have also been set up to prosecute criminals guilty of violations of international humanitarian law.⁵⁹

49. Awareness campaigns carried out by the UN include UNICEF's initiative using the hashtag #BringBackOurChildhood in social media, which promotes consciousness on the importance of children being able to enjoy their youth to the full, and not be deprived of their rights. Another example is the "Children, not Soldiers" Campaign, aiming to inform the public on child soldiers and end recruitment by the end of 2016.

⁵⁷ https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/15-18739_Children-in-Conflict_FINAL-WEB.pdf

⁵⁸ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusca/>
<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/civilian.shtml>

⁵⁹ <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/>



Proposed Solutions

50. One of the Council's most valuable tools will be to end impunity for perpetrators, which can be addressed through the International Criminal Court. The adoption of national laws for the prosecution of perpetrators should also be encouraged. Moreover, committees may prove useful in producing targeted measures against parties or individuals constantly violating their responsibility to protect civilians.

51. The Council should also pay greater attention to raising awareness of the protection of children and civilians in armed conflict, and of the delivery of humanitarian aid. By developing consciousness on this issue, public opinion will result in policy changes made by both governments and international bodies. While conflict does not affect the entire global population, it is imperative that citizens worldwide are aware of this issue. Despite having made significant progress on youth awareness through workshops and UN Youth Briefing Papers, the UN needs to take further action to promote universal awareness, including that of adults and citizens in conflict-stricken nations. With access to this type of information, citizens will be made aware of demining activities, and understand their rights in terms of reporting crimes to the authorities and accessing emergency relief.

52. Furthermore, oppressed populations would greatly benefit from an increase in the UN's proactive and systematic engagement with non-state militias, in order to foster dialogue to reduce grave breaches of international law.

53. Community-based protection and data collection, as well as the broadening of monitoring mechanisms to include civilians and humanitarian workers, could also be promoted.

54. Strengthening victim identification methods in cases of enforced disappearances and trafficking, and ensuring victims have access to assistance and protection as well as efficient family tracing methods could also be implemented.

55. Member States may opt to encourage the presence of family mediation, community healing and vocational training so as to achieve sustainable reintegration processes.

56. Finally, funding and the involvement of NGOs and intergovernmental initiatives – such as the World Food Programme and the International Organization for Migration – must be key considerations when enforcing solutions to maintain basic levels of medical, psychological and food services, as well as raising awareness in conflict-affected areas.



Key Questions

57. Member States should consider the following questions to ensure rich debate in all its stages, from the drafting of position papers to the adoption of a resolution:

- a. How can the Council ensure the upholding of the Responsibility to Protect and prevent the worsening of humanitarian situations in conflict-stricken areas? How can the role of peacekeeping operations in the protection of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian aid be strengthened?
- b. What immediate measures should the Council prioritize? How will the Security Council find a balance between protecting children and civilians, and ensuring their access to emergency relief in armed conflict? How can the Council's solutions differ from previous actions? How will awareness measures be targeted? How will the Council effectively fund these measures and avoid funding breaches?
- c. How can monitoring and awareness mechanisms for violations of international law and the implementation of international action be improved? How will the Council ensure the timely inclusion of all parties to conflict? How will the Council address different, current case studies?
- d. How can relevant actors use their leverage over parties to a conflict, to secure unimpeded and timely humanitarian action to needy civilians? How can this be used as an immediate measure for the prevention and de-escalation of conflict?

58. These questions are intended to reinforce, rather than replace, the responsibility of states. Also, please note that the actions of Security Council members outlined in this Secretary-General report constitute only some aspects of their complex policies, and thus merit further research.

Further Research

- For further information on the Committee: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/>
- Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed conflict: childrenandarmedconflict.un.org
- For monitoring of children and armed conflict: www.watchlist.org
- For information on humanitarian aid: www.icrc.org
- For information and guidance on resolutions, presidential statements and press statements: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/>
- For information on past actions of the Security Council: www.securitycouncilreport.org
- Please see in-text citations for further sources.