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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett/Ms. Persaud	(Guyana)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mrs. Remaoun Nouredine
	China	Mr. Zedong Du
	Denmark	Ms. Nyborg
	France	Ms. Freudenreich
	Greece	Mr. Rizos
	Pakistan	Mrs. Ijaz
	Panama	Mr. Gomez Batista
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Paek
	Russian Federation	Ms. Krokhina
	Sierra Leone	Ms. Tengbe
	Slovenia	Mr. Slamic
	Somalia	Mr. Abdullahi Yusuf
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Barry
	United States of America	Mr. Mendoza

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Effective strategies to end and prevent grave violations against children

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2025/247)

Letter dated 10 June 2025 from the Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2025/366)

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The meeting was suspended at 6.05 p.m. on Wednesday, 25 June and resumed on Thursday, 26 June at 10.05 a.m.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after three minutes.

I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mrs. Abd Karim (Malaysia): Malaysia expresses its appreciation to you, Madam President, for convening this important debate. We also thank Special Representative Virginia Gamba de Potgieter and the briefers for their valuable insights.

The Secretary-General's 2025 report on children and armed conflict (S/2025/247) paints a grim picture. It reveals a staggering increase in grave violations against children, with 41,370 verified incidents in 2024. That is a sobering reflection of the failure to protect the most vulnerable in times of war.

Nowhere is that crisis more acute than in Gaza. The report confirms that more than 7,000 grave violations were committed by Israeli security forces in 2024, including the killing and maiming of children, the destruction of educational and medical infrastructure and the systematic denial of humanitarian assistance. Thousands of children were killed and injured in attacks that showed blatant disregard for international humanitarian law. The situation is further aggravated by the collapse of essential services. Children in Gaza today face death, starvation, displacement and trauma. In fact, they face the complete erosion of their basic rights.

Malaysia condemns those atrocities in the strongest terms. We are particularly alarmed by the continued use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, the obstruction of humanitarian aid and the targeting of civilian infrastructure, including schools, shelters and hospitals. We reiterate the Secretary-General's call for all parties to fully comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution must be respected at all times, especially when children are present.

Grave violations of the rights of Palestinian children have continued for far too long, with impunity. It is imperative that thorough and impartial investigations be carried out, and that perpetrators be held accountable in accordance with international law. The failure to pursue justice not only emboldens further atrocities but undermines the very foundation of the international legal system.

Children are not mere statistics. Behind every figure in the Secretary-General's report is a life interrupted and a future denied. Our collective responsibility is to ensure that children are protected from violence, exploitation and fear. Malaysia remains firmly committed to the protection of children in armed conflict and is proud to announce its commitment to the Prove It Matters campaign. We must act now to protect the lives, dignity and rights of all children, especially those enduring the horrors of war.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Ms. Ni Mhuircheartaigh (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and adds the following in a national capacity.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2025/247), as well as Special Representative Gamba de Potgieter and all those who support this critical mandate.

Built into the bedrock of the multilateral system, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is a recognition that childhood involves an entitlement

to special care and assistance. The contrast between that universal truth and the facts captured in this report on children and armed conflict could not be more stark. In statistic after damning statistic, the report lays bare the scale of abuse and deliberate targeting of children in conflict. Ireland notes and is deeply concerned that the highest numbers of grave violations against children were verified in Israel and Palestine, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Nigeria and Haiti. We note with grave concern too, the sharp increases in Lebanon, Mozambique, Haiti, Ethiopia and Ukraine.

We are appalled by that litany of horrors and by the staggering 25 per cent surge in the number of verified grave violations against children in armed conflict last year. It is particularly shocking that that increase comes on top of the already unprecedented violations in 2023.

Twenty years on since the establishment of this crucial mandate, we need to see progress. We commend Guyana for requesting States to focus today on strategies to prevent and end those violations. We are pleased to contribute some suggestions in that regard.

First, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General is central to monitoring, reporting on and improving the situation of children in conflict zones. An adequately resourced Under-Secretary-General-level office holder, reflecting the full scope of the mandate, is essential to ensure focus and enable dialogue at the highest levels. That is crucial for all the areas I will now mention.

We call for the mainstreaming of child protection across the United Nations' work on peace and security, including in the Council. Systematic integration of children and armed conflict priorities across resolutions, peacekeeping mandates and special political missions, as well as humanitarian and crisis responses, could be transformative in achieving child-sensitive outcomes that contribute to lasting peace.

We must also address the fact that many grave violations arise from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. We highlighted that fact, with partners, at an event on protection of civilians earlier this year. Eighty-eight States, including Ireland, have endorsed the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. Further, the Safe Schools Declaration commits 121 States, including Ireland, to strengthen the protection of education from attack and ensure continuity of safe education during conflict. We urge all States that have not yet done so to endorse and implement both Declarations.

Fundamentally, we need urgent and credible action to ensure respect for international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Accountability for violations is essential, both in the interest of the victims and as a key preventative measure. States should halt arms transfers to parties listed in the children and armed conflict report, publicly condemn violations of child rights and strengthen both national and international accountability mechanisms, including through support for dedicated child rights expertise. Ireland also urges all States to support the International Criminal Court and calls for all States Parties to adhere to their obligations under the Rome Statute to cooperate with the Court.

Many children referenced in this report will suffer life-long consequences, including disability. Conflict also presents particular challenges for persons with disability and Ireland has been actively engaged with resolution 2475 (2019) on that topic. We commit to bringing greater attention to the challenges of persons with disabilities, including newly disabled children, in situations of conflict.

We must collectively also ensure support and reintegration assistance to child victims, including a need to prioritize international funding for education in humanitarian contexts. Ireland will continue to play its part in that regard.

We call on all listed parties to engage constructively with the United Nations and to commit to concrete, time-bound action plans. We encourage neighbouring States to form local groups of friends and to support implementation by listed parties and call for meaningful civil society participation in that regard.

In conclusion, we note that this report represents only the cases which have been recorded and verified by the United Nations. As funding for child protection decreases, there are many more children whose suffering has not been recorded and whose voice cannot be heard. We hope that today's focus in the Council on effective strategies to end and prevent grave violations against children can mark a turning point and help achieve a safe childhood for all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Ms. Matheï (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): What is most shocking about the first statistic in the Secretary-General's report (S/2025/247) — a 25 per cent increase in the number of grave violations against children compared to 2023 — is that 2023 was already a horrific year, marked by extreme levels of violence against children.

The total disregard for children's rights by so many parties to conflict around the world is deeply disturbing. We must reverse that trend and act urgently and collectively to protect children in situations of armed conflict.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, thousands of children continue to be recruited by various armed groups, even though awareness-raising efforts by the United Nations have led to the release of some children. Belgium condemns in the strongest possible terms the widespread sexual violence perpetrated against girls, including by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While we welcome the Government's continued commitment to implement the 2012 action plan, we echo the Secretary-General's urgent appeal to the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government to improve the prevention of sexual violence. Efforts must also be redoubled to ensure that the perpetrators of those crimes are brought to justice.

(*spoke in English*)

The devastatingly high number of verified grave violations against children in Gaza and the West Bank, almost entirely attributed to the Israeli armed and security forces, sadly illustrates the ongoing tragedy for Palestinian children. There can be no justification for the denial of humanitarian access to starving children trying to survive in the most dire circumstances, for the destruction of schools and hospitals and for the killing and maiming of thousands of children, many of whom are left with lifelong disabilities. Those crimes happen when, in violation of international humanitarian law, excessive and disproportionate force is used in densely populated areas.

Belgium urges Israel, as a party listed in the annex of the Secretary-General's report, to develop and implement an action plan to end and prevent grave violations against children. We urge Hamas and the Palestinian Jihad, also listed, to do the same and to immediately and unconditionally release all remaining hostages.

In Ukraine, Russia's war of aggression is in its fourth year. However, the number of grave violations against Ukrainian children by Russia's Armed Forces is still on the rise. Belgium strongly condemns those grave violations and urges Russia to engage with the United Nations on a children and armed conflict action plan. Russia should also return all Ukrainian children that have been illegally transferred to Russia since

the start of the war. We commend Ukraine on the continued implementation of its plan to prevent grave violations against children.

In these challenging times for the multilateral system and against the backdrop of UN80 reforms, Belgium reaffirms its strong support for the children and armed conflict mandate. We believe it is of the utmost importance to protect the specific character of the children and armed conflict mandate, at the nexus between peace and security and human rights, and represented by a dedicated high-level Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Through its link with the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has a unique position within the peace and security pillar to end and prevent grave violations against children in conflict settings. Belgium also reaffirms its deep appreciation and support for the work of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on children and armed conflict which we are financing through UNICEF.

Before closing, allow me to express Belgium's gratitude to Special Representative Virginia Gamba de Potgieter for her outstanding work in support of children and armed conflict over the past nine years. We have always strongly supported the Special Representative and her mandate and look forward to continuing to do so with her successor, who we hope will soon be appointed.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Bamyia (Palestine): Palestinian children know death in all its facets and all its horror — the death they experience, the death they endure, the death they witness and the one they have barely survived, so far. All 1 million Palestinian children in Gaza have endured agony. Not a single one of them has been spared.

The most conservative estimates are that 50,000 Palestinian children have been killed or maimed in Gaza, out of 1 million Palestinian children there. That is without accounting for those still under the rubble. Some 50,000 Palestinian children have been killed and maimed. That would be the equivalent of 700,000 British, French or German children killed or maimed. That would be the equivalent of 3.5 million American children killed or maimed. That would be the equivalent of 150,000 Israeli children killed or maimed. Reflect on those numbers and on what would be happening within these walls and outside of these walls if they were Israeli children. But for some, the comparison can not stand. They are not Israeli, they are just Palestinian.

We will never accept or tolerate the idea that Palestinian lives are less sacred; that our people are expendable; that Palestinian parents mourn their children less, or that our children feel pain less; that their killing is acceptable or less grave; that those killing them have a legitimate claim to supremacy that makes them immune to condemnation and to being held accountable. No one should accept those double standards, especially when it comes to children.

The same people who evoke genocide every time a single Israeli is killed, express outrage that we evoke genocide for the killing and maiming of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, many of whom are children, following the destruction by Israel of all the requirements of life for more than 2 million Palestinians in Gaza.

All children are entitled to life, freedom, dignity and security. They are entitled to their childhood. Those who have to ask what is the nationality of that child, what is the faith of that child or what is their race of that child to know whether they should be outraged or shaken by their fate cannot claim to value human life, honour international law or defend humanity. We should all denounce and stand against seeing children killed, maimed and held captive, regardless of who they are or what

group they belong to. We are pursuing a different future, without occupation or violence, in which all children are safe — Palestinian children, Israeli children and all children around the world. That is how one honours the law and humanity consistently.

Palestinian children are killed, maimed, orphaned, starved, displaced and traumatized. Who thinks there could be any justification for taking away their lives, their limbs or their loved ones? Can anyone imagine the level of dehumanization needed for those crimes to be able to continue for 628 days now — 628 days of killing, starving and maiming children on live television? Every day, the world sees our children burning, dying, suffocating under the rubble. And no one has been held accountable. Not a single person has been held accountable to this day.

In response to our description of the agony of our children, a few days ago the Israeli representative quoted Golda Meir, the former Israeli Prime Minister, who said “Peace will come when the Arabs will love their children more than they hate us.” Is there anything more dehumanizing than denying the love that Palestinian parents carry for their children? They hate the Israeli occupation because of what it does to their children. We see the images of Palestinian parents standing up to protect their children, and we see how crushed they are when they fail to do so, as they hold their children’s bodies tight whether the children are dead or alive, as they tear at the earth to get their children out from under the rubble or as they try to heal their children’s burns with their hands — because there is no medicine, nothing, to heal our children’s burns. They watch them burning.

If we loved our children enough, this would be over? How much hate do they need to have for us to do that? We see the parents risking their lives to get food for their children, to feed their loved ones. We see them every day now, as if it was normal. Now it is part of the routine: 30 Palestinians killed trying to get aid, 40 Palestinian killed trying to get aid, treated like cattle, shot. It is a group of victims that did not exist before: people trying to get aid. To the humanitarians, to the doctors, to the journalists, to the United Nations staff, to the people, to the children, to the women and to the men, we now add the people who are trying to get aid, every single day. And now, what does UNICEF say after the famine? They might die of thirst — occupation, engineered famine, occupation, engineered thirst.

And then Israeli leaders come to the Security Council and tell those present that they are protecting them and defending civilization against barbarism. This is civilization. Is it not recognized behind all those barbaric acts? Let me share a quote:

“They are targeting a hospital. In this hospital there are patients who are immobile, who can’t even move. Right next to it, it’s a children’s ward, a baby’s ward. Infants they targeted. They can give this nonsense that they’re targeting military sites — what military sites? They are targeting civilians because they are a criminal regime”.

That is a quotation by Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, speaking at an Israeli hospital damaged by the impact of an Iranian missile. Does he have amnesia? Did he forget how they destroyed all the hospitals in the Gaza Strip, how they bombed them systematically? Did he forget the images of Palestinian babies dying in incubators because we could not get them out, of having to move wounded people on stretchers amidst the rubble? Did he forget how they arrested doctors who, still today, remain in custody or who have died in detention and under torture? Palestinian doctors have been stripped, raped and killed. But if they are Palestinian, it does not matter. It is not as outrageous. It is not as unacceptable.

Yesterday, the Israeli representative told the Council that human shields are the reason that they have to kill all Palestinians. They use human shields, hence the need to shoot at all of them, he said; that was the reason that they bombed them

with massive bombs. And he was outraged at the use of human shields. The United Nations verified the use of 27 Palestinian boys in the past year by Israeli occupation forces as human shields in Gaza and in the West Bank — the Israeli army used boys as human shields. But they are outraged at the use of human shields, as long as it is not about them using them. When they use human shields, it is civilization. We have to understand that they are different. They are different group of people. And we are a different group of people. The same rules do not apply.

They told the Council that holding remains is barbaric. We all agree that everyone is entitled to the dignified burial of their loved ones. That should be the principle. However, the Government of Israel withholds Palestinian bodies. Some have been withheld by Israel for 30 years. But it is not barbarism when Israel does it. Israeli barbaric acts are civilization — our very existence is barbarism to them. Our children are being described as monsters by the monsters who are killing them, starving them, maiming them, abducting them, torturing them, harassing them, traumatizing them — those who left them with no food, no water, no shelter above their heads, no school, no hospital, no hope, no life and no limbs, those who dare come here and scold the world for criticizing their actions.

We have sat in this Chamber many times, as United Nations representatives had to sit through the bashing, bullying, insults, incitement and threats of Israeli representatives against them. Council members have seen it happen here many times, and meanwhile, United Nations staff on the ground were being killed, maimed, detained or tortured based on that incitement against the United Nations.

And yet, unfortunately, I have to say that yesterday, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General could not sit through the Algerian representative's calm and carefully argued criticism of the shortcomings of her Office in the implementation of its mandate. At a moment in which, at the very least, 17,000 Palestinian children have been killed, 40,000 Palestinian children have lost one or both parents, 4,000 have had limbs amputated and 1 million are being starved, we are not entitled to criticize the shortcomings of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General? Can she not bear to sit through that criticism? I can only imagine what would happen if a United Nations representative were to stand and leave the room while being criticized by an Israeli representative. I am not sure that they would keep their position. But Israelis are different. Palestinians are different. No, our lives are not less sacred, and we are entitled to our outrage.

The world called for an immediate ceasefire, for the release of hostages and prisoners, for the immediate entry of humanitarian aid for the withdrawal of Israeli forces. And nothing is happening. But where is the sense of urgency? Where is the deterrence? Where is the accountability to stop a genocide? We cannot say that negotiations are ongoing, and, in the meantime, they are killing thousands of Palestinians — thousands upon thousands — using the distribution of aid to forcibly displace them, telling Council members clearly that they want to end Palestinian life in Gaza by forcibly displacing our people and seizing our land. Two million people are today confined to 16 per cent of Gaza. They are being squeezed through the distribution of aid and Israel's use of starvation as a method of warfare and the distribution of aid for military purposes.

Palestinian children are being subjected to all of that for one reason and one reason alone. Of this Council members should be convinced by now. Whether they are in Gaza or the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, whether they find themselves in the hands of Israeli occupation forces or settlers, they have committed a crime: they were born Palestinian. In the eyes of Israel that is the ultimate crime, because our existence is a problem. They want the land, and they want to get rid of the people who belong to that land, a people whom they want to see disappear, and they are acting upon that.

There is a collective duty to fight back, to act, to do whatever is necessary in line with international law to bring the genocide to an end. Our common world is ending in Gaza. It can be saved only by starting with Gaza. Save Gaza, so that we all can be saved by Gaza. We see the overwhelming solidarity, here and around the world. We see the principled positions, the mobilization. Virtually the entire world stands with Gaza, and yet Gaza stands alone. And it will continue to stand alone, as long as we allow this genocide to continue. Save the children of Gaza. End the genocide.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): It is a little difficult to speak after the powerful statement by the observer of the Observer State of Palestine, but here I go.

I thank all the briefers and especially commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mrs. Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, and her team for their tireless efforts to protect children in conflict settings.

Brazil is alarmed by the 25 per cent increase in verified grave violations against children in armed conflicts in 2024. We are particularly appalled by the systematic use of explosive weapons in populated areas and by the sharp increase in rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. The Secretary-General's report (S/2025/247) is a grim reminder of the inability of the Council and Member States to protect children from killing, maiming, sexual violence and other grave violations.

The situation in Gaza is particularly staggering. We are witnessing, in real time, the daily use of explosive weapons in densely populated urban areas, disproportionately affecting children, who bear no responsibility for the war. As the Security Council fails to fulfil its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, hospitals and schools in Gaza, including those of the United Nations, are systematically attacked, putting children on the front lines of the conflict. Not only is humanitarian access being denied, but humanitarian workers are also being targeted, and children have reportedly been injured or killed while attempting to retrieve food. And Gaza is an appalling, extreme example of what goes on in the Sudan, Ukraine, Haiti, Somalia and elsewhere.

Brazil calls upon all parties to all conflicts to respect and protect children, to allow and facilitate rapid, safe, systematic and unimpeded access for relief personnel, equipment and supplies and the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to all children. We also urge all parties to fully comply with their obligations under international law to respect and protect humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel, including national and locally recruited staff.

We welcome the progress made by the United Nations in engaging with parties to conflicts on child protection under the children and armed conflict agenda. We further welcome the fact that more than 16,000 children formerly associated with armed forces or groups received protection or reintegration support in 2024. In the context of the UN80 Initiative, Brazil believes that the capacity of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict must be safeguarded and strengthened. As a champion of the Prove It Matters campaign, Brazil reaffirms its strong commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the children and armed conflict agenda.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Mr. Monari (Kenya): Kenya thanks you, Madam President, for convening this important debate and expresses our appreciation to all of the briefers for their sobering reports, which reflect the devastating toll of conflict on children.

Resolution 1612 (2005) marks a key milestone in protecting children affected by armed conflict, underscoring the international community's duty to protect children

and ensure their recovery, reintegration and long-term well-being. Yet children continue to suffer from indiscriminate violence, abductions, sexual violence and the denial of humanitarian access. The verification of more than 41,000 grave violations against children in 2024 points to the deliberate and systematic use of such atrocities as tactics of war. Those crimes leave deep, lasting trauma and often go unreported owing to stigma, fear and lack of access to justice and care.

Kenya speaks from both experience and solidarity. While Kenya has not experienced widespread armed conflict involving children in recent years, we have served as a regional anchor for peace, protection and the humanitarian response. Kenya hosts thousands of refugee children fleeing conflict in Somalia, South Sudan and the Great Lakes region, many of whom are survivors of the very grave violations that we are discussing today. Through collaborative efforts with United Nations agencies and partners, we have implemented child protection and psychological support programmes and invested in peace education, in particular in refugee-hosting regions such as Dadaab and Kakuma. In addition, in its national action plan on women and peace and security for 2020–2024, Kenya explicitly commits to strengthening women's and communities' roles in preventing violence against children in conflict-affected settings. Our Children Act, of 2022, provides enhanced protection in line with international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Kenya acknowledges the progress made under the children and armed conflict agenda. However, that progress must not obscure the scale of unmet need. We, therefore, call for four key actions. First, international law must be strengthened, particularly regarding the use of explosive weapons in civilian areas. Secondly, mechanisms for the accountability of perpetrators of grave violations must be enhanced, with survivor-centred approaches. Thirdly, listed parties must be encouraged to adopt and fully implement time-bound action plans to end all grave violations. Fourthly, predictable and adequate funding for child protection must be ensured, even in fiscally constrained environments.

Kenya remains steadfast in its commitment to the protection of children affected by armed conflict and calls for decisive and corrective action to ensure that their rights and dignity are upheld. We believe that that is not just a legal obligation but a moral imperative. Children are not, and must never be viewed as, collateral damage.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of San Marino.

Mr. Beleffi (San Marino): San Marino aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict and with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this important meeting, the Secretary-General for his annual report (S/2025/247) and the briefers for their presentations.

As we approach the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1612 (2005), San Marino renews its commitment to the children and armed conflict agenda and supports the role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Children remain disproportionately affected by armed conflict. The Secretary-General's report highlights the record number of grave violations in 2024, with an increase of 25 per cent over previous years.

San Marino is particularly worried about the high number of grave violations against children reported — the denial of humanitarian access, killing and maiming of children, the recruitment and use of children, abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence.

San Marino calls on all armed forces and armed groups to constructively engage with the United Nations to agree on and implement action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children, in accordance with their obligation under international law.

San Marino also firmly condemns the reported attacks on schools and hospitals and their use for military purposes. We reiterate our support for the Safe Schools Declaration. Educational facilities should be a safe place for all children, students and teachers.

We call on all Member States to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We also encourage all parties to support other important tools, such as the Paris Principles and Commitments and the Vancouver Principles.

San Marino is deeply concerned by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and has therefore endorsed the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. We encourage all States to do the same and to adhere to the commitments contained therein.

San Marino reiterates the importance of accountability for all grave violations against children. Impunity for the perpetrators of grave violations is not acceptable.

The international community has the duty not only to stop and prevent those violations but also to assist child victims and to work for their reintegration.

I would like to express San Marino's unwavering support for the work of the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, Mrs. Virginia Gamba de Potgieter and of her Office.

No child should ever experience the horror of war. That should not be forgotten. Children are the root of peace and we should therefore invest in them, in their safety and in their future.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Ms. Narváez Ojeda (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is widely acknowledged that armed conflict is one of the main threats to international peace and security, with children being the most affected.

Aware of that, Chile is a member of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, reiterating its firm commitment to the protection of children in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. My country is also deeply committed to the Vancouver Principles, which aim to prevent the recruitment and use of children in conflict.

In recent days, we received the report of the Secretary-General (S/2025/247), the findings of which are devastating, revealing a 25 per cent increase in the number of grave violations against children in conflict in 2024 compared to 2023. Those figures resonate even more starkly today as we commemorate 80 years since the signing of the Charter of the United Nations.

Cases of sexual violence increased by 35 per cent, with cases of gang rape skyrocketing, evidence of the systematic and deliberate use of sexual violence as a tactic of war. In real numbers, 36,221 grave violations were verified in 2024, affecting 22,495 children.

Non-State armed groups were responsible for 50 per cent of the grave violations, while Government forces were primarily responsible for killing and maiming, denial of humanitarian access and attacks on schools and hospitals.

With regard to the location of those grave violations, we note that the highest number occurred in the occupied Palestinian territory, followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Nigeria and Haiti.

We share the Secretary-General's dismay at the intensity of grave violations against children in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially the widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas. We are deeply concerned by the significant increase in grave violations in the Gaza Strip. We note with deep regret the increase in grave violations against children by the Israeli armed and security forces, including the high number of children killed and maimed, attacks on schools, hospitals and ambulances and the denial of humanitarian access.

The high number of children recruited and used in conflict is alarming, with an increase of more than 3,000 children detained for real or presumed links with armed groups. We consider it essential to consolidate a preventive approach, understanding that the best way to avoid recruitment is to foster democratic and inclusive societies, thus avoiding segregation and social marginalization. We must promote a culture of peace that supports children in the long term, from the origins to the end of the cycle of violence, in order to achieve full and systematic reintegration.

We are aware of the destructive impact of armed conflict on formal education systems, and of the importance of schooling in emergency contexts. Chile reiterates the urgency of integrating into each ceasefire agreement specific provisions for the protection of children, including humanitarian and educational corridors.

In conclusion, the Secretary-General's report is a testament to the effectiveness of the mechanisms of the agenda on children and armed conflict, developed over more than 20 years since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). We stress its importance as the basis for efforts to prevent and respond to violations against children and to ensure accountability.

Chile reiterates its full willingness to cooperate with all Member States and United Nations mechanisms, believing that the defence of children is the pillar of any lasting peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mrs. Idres (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): We express our appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Guyana for organizing this important debate. We would like to thank the briefers and commend the concerted effort of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mrs. Virginia Gamba de Potgieter and her Office.

We have read with interest the annual report (S/2025/247) and took note of the recommendations contained therein.

The Sudan welcomes the inclusion of abduction, as a fifth violation added to the list of grave violations committed by the Rapid Support Forces which, according to last year's report (S/2024/384), included the following violations: killing and maiming, sexual violence and rape, recruitment and attacks on schools and hospitals. We must remind ourselves that all those who support this militia are complicit in those grave violations against the innocent children of the Sudan.

As part of our sincere and constructive cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative, the Sudan proposed that the action plan, signed with the Office of the Special Representative since 2016, be developed and transformed into an action plan tailored to the current developments, confirming that the Government is committed to continuing its efforts to protect our children from violations, particularly now as the Rapid Support Forces are continuing their worst violations against children in Darfur and other parts of the Sudan. A national focal point has already been

identified and is currently working on that in cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies.

The report should not overlook the clear and tangible progress and the significant achievements of national authorities in the field of child protection in conflict-affected areas, as well as efforts to consolidate and empower the work of preventive mechanisms. For example, the national technical committee for the protection of children in armed conflict has released more than 71 children who had been recruited by the Rapid Support Forces. We provided them with psychosocial support to achieve their reintegration back into society.

The following facts must be highlighted.

First, the Sudanese Armed Forces, despite the huge challenges they face, are committed to protecting children. The Sudanese Armed Forces, based on their experience in the field of international humanitarian law, have taken a number of necessary measures to minimize civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure, with full adherence to the rules of war and conflicts.

Secondly, the Sudanese Armed Forces is a professional and well-trained army that respects and upholds international law and international humanitarian law and is fulfilling its constitutional duty to protect the sovereignty, territory and people of the Sudan. Therefore, any military operation carried out by the army is undertaken in accordance with precise coordinates targeting the locations of the Rapid Support Forces militia, even if those areas were previously civilian areas but have become military sites after the militia seized control of them and turned them into military platforms.

In conclusion, no one is more concerned about the Sudanese children than the relevant Sudanese institutions. We stress therefore the need for accuracy and objectivity. Information must be exchanged with the competent authorities so that it can be verified. Government agencies must also be supported in filling gaps, as that contributes directly and in a practical way to preventing impunity and ensuring credibility.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): At the outset, let me thank the presidency of Guyana for organizing this very important debate. I appreciate the briefers for their valuable insights and comprehensive briefings yesterday.

Let me begin with Nelson Mandela's words.

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

Protecting children is a moral imperative. Their well-being must remain central to our nation-building efforts.

Yet, we are alarmed by the continued suffering of children in armed conflicts worldwide. The Secretary-General's report (S/2025/247) reveals a 25 per cent surge in grave violations, with nearly 12,000 children killed or maimed. Their fundamental rights are being ignored amid escalating crises.

Children, the most vulnerable in conflict, endure the harshest and most lasting consequences. Their health, education and social bonds are deeply affected.

The use of children in conflict is a moral outrage. Grave violations, including abductions, forced recruitment, killing and maiming, have reached record levels. Access for humanitarian protections is increasingly restricted, while weak justice systems fail to hold perpetrators accountable.

Insufficient funding for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes further hinders the reintegration of former child soldiers. The worsening crisis demands urgent, unified global actions.

Now let me highlight a few points.

First, the protection of human and child rights must be upheld in all circumstances. Children have an inherent right to life, care and development. We urge all parties in conflict to respect international human rights and humanitarian law, immediately cease violations against children and end their recruitment and exploitation. Safe, unhindered humanitarian access, especially for children, must be ensured. We also call for rapid response teams to assist and respond to child-specific needs. We strongly urge mainstreaming the children and armed conflict agenda into peace negotiations and ceasefire agreements. Equally, schools must be declared zones of peace, as successfully implemented by Nepal during its conflict.

Secondly, national Governments, having the primary responsibility to protect children, must implement robust legal frameworks, ensuring greater accountability measures for violations against children and bringing perpetrators to justice. International assistance and support should be extended to enhance the capacity of States in that regard.

Thirdly, enhanced international support is essential to strengthen education, health and social protection systems. Investing in conflict-resilient education, including safe school infrastructure, mobile classrooms and teacher protections is vital. We also urge increased resources and capacity for tools, such as the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, to ensure timely and effective protection of children.

Finally, preventive action is essential to avert conflict and safeguard children. Addressing the root causes of conflicts must be central to our efforts. We call on the international community to strengthen global solidarity and partnership and engage in diplomacy and dialogue to end conflicts and build a safer world for every child.

Nepal is proud to be a State party to major international child rights instruments.

Our peace process prioritized the rehabilitation and reintegration of conflict-affected children with early, targeted protection measures.

The Constitution enshrines children's rights as a fundamental human right. Our laws and policies prioritize child welfare, protections and development with international standards and commitments.

As the largest troop- and police-contributing country, Nepal upholds the protection mandate in peacekeeping operations and supports host nations in capacity-building and child protection efforts.

In conclusion, protecting children in armed conflict is not optional; it is the moral compass of civilizations. Let us come together with unwavering resolve to defend their rights, restore their dignity and ensure every child has support to heal, grow and thrive beyond the shadows of conflict. When they are safe, the world is safe.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mrs. Zalabata Torres (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of this open debate and commend Guyana's leadership.

We appreciate that this meeting focuses on accountability, justice and prevention. Those principles have been central to Colombia's response to the violations against children in armed conflict, guiding the design and implementation of public policies to ensure protective environments, strengthen the institutions responsible and make progress towards the non-repetition of grave violations.

Colombia reaffirms its political commitment to protecting the rights of children and to the full implementation of the mandate of this agenda almost 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). We firmly condemn all grave violations and crimes committed against children in armed conflict, in particular those that jeopardize their lives, integrity, dignity and development.

We reaffirm our commitment to the victims and to the prevention of new grave violations. The State has therefore intensified its actions and good practices with a territorial-, ethnic- and gender-based approach.

The Intersectoral Commission for the Prevention of Forced Recruitment, Sexual Abuse and Violence against Children and Adolescents by Illegal Armed Groups and Criminal Organizations prioritized 145 municipalities and strengthened local response teams.

For its part, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute implemented programmes such as the Dream Catchers programme, benefiting more than 100,000 children and adolescents.

We have also strengthened measures to address sexual violence, including awareness-raising campaigns and the training of officials. Similarly, members of the armed forces and the national police have been trained in the prevention of the recruitment and use of and sexual violence against children, with the support of the United Nations.

Colombia is making progress in implementing its national plan for the Safe Schools Declaration and, in 2024, strengthened education on landmine risk management in rural schools, in partnership with UNICEF and local organizations. We also welcome the Prove It Matters campaign, headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We see it as a useful tool for uniting national prevention and response efforts, focusing on the importance of the rights of the child.

These actions demonstrate how the architecture of the children and armed conflict agenda, which we fully support, has had a positive impact in our country. It has contributed to the development of a robust and sustainable institutional system. Colombia's commitment is clear. We will continue to work through dialogue for a peace that puts the rights of the child at the heart of our State action. No society can build itself up on the suffering of children. Children have the right to be heard and to grow up free from fear, violence and war.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Timor-Leste.

Mr. Babo Soares (Timor-Leste): At the outset, I wish to express Timor-Leste's deep appreciation to the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for convening this important and timely debate in its capacity as President of the Security Council. We also thank the briefers for their sobering and powerful presentations.

The suffering of children in armed conflict represents one of the greatest tragedies of our time. From Gaza to Ukraine, from the Sahel to Syria, children continue to be subjected to unimaginable violence. Their bodies, minds and futures are being shattered by bombs, bullets and abuse. Their voices are being silenced in war zones, detention centres, refugee camps and mass graves.

In Gaza, we are witnessing the large-scale killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and hospitals and deeply concerning reports of arbitrary detention and mistreatment. In Israel, children were obliged to hide in bomb shelters, avoiding missiles shot from outside. In Ukraine, thousands of children have reportedly been forcibly deported and separated from their families — an egregious violation of international law. In Nigeria, girls are still being abducted by Boko Haram and

subjected to sexual violence and forced marriage, years after Chibok. In Afghanistan, girls are being systematically denied their right to education and face attacks simply for trying to attend school. These are not isolated incidents; they are part of a broader pattern of grave violations against children that demand urgent, coordinated and sustained action.

Timor-Leste firmly believes that international humanitarian law and international human rights law must be the bedrock of protection for all children in armed conflict. We call for the universal ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, as well as the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols Additional.

Legal commitments must be matched with action through domestic legislation, military codes of conduct, training and operational accountability. We further underscore the essential role of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism. Accurate, disaggregated and timely data is indispensable for policy, prevention and justice.

We call for enhanced support to local civil society organizations that document violations at the grass-roots level. Their proximity, trust and contextual knowledge make them indispensable partners.

Accountability must be at the heart of our efforts. Whether in Myanmar, South Sudan or occupied territories, the perpetrators of grave violations against children must be brought to justice — nationally and, where needed, internationally. We call for full cooperation with the International Criminal Court and relevant mechanisms and urge that child survivors be given access to safe, supportive and child-sensitive justice processes, including reparations and psychosocial support.

We remain gravely concerned by the continued threat posed by explosive remnants of war, landmines, cluster munitions and unexploded ordnance, which continue to claim many young lives long after conflicts end. In Yemen and Syria, children have lost limbs and lives simply walking to school. Timor-Leste strongly supports universal adherence to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions and calls for intensified global support for mine action and victim assistance.

Sexual violence against children in conflict — whether in camps, occupied territories or within the ranks of armed groups — is a heinous crime that demands zero tolerance. Survivor-centred protection systems must be scaled up, including access to safe spaces, health services, legal aid and reintegration programmes. Peacekeepers and armed personnel must be equipped with the training and tools to prevent and respond effectively, guided by clear accountability structures and reporting protocols.

We also stress the importance of sustained dialogue with the parties listed in the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2025/247). Action plans with measurable benchmarks and timelines have proven effective in several contexts, including in the Philippines and South Sudan. We call for sustained United Nations engagement and resources to support such efforts.

Regional and sub-regional organizations have a vital role in supporting child protection through peace processes; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives; and security sector reform. Yet no strategy can succeed without addressing the root causes that render children vulnerable to recruitment and exploitation: poverty, inequality, displacement and lack of access to quality education.

As a country that emerged from conflict and reconstruction with the support of the United Nations, Timor-Leste brings to the Council the weight of lived experience.

We know the cost of war on children. We know the value of peace. And we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the children and armed conflict agenda.

It is our shared moral, legal and political responsibility to ensure that no child, anywhere, bears the burden of war. Let us act — not with words alone, but with coordinated, principled and sustained action — to deliver protection, justice and peace for the world's most vulnerable.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Tun (Myanmar): I wish to thank you, Madam President, and the presidency of Guyana for convening this meeting. I also wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Gamba de Potgieter and the other briefers for their insightful and sobering presentations. We cannot agree more that this agenda has become more critical than ever.

Every year the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict presents alarming figures of great violations against children in armed conflict. This year's report (S/2025/247) is no exception. As violence against children in armed conflict have reached an unprecedented level, with a staggering 25 per cent surge in grave violations, compared to 2023. In particular, section III of the report reminds us that situations in several countries, including my own, have seen little progress and have, instead, worsened.

In Myanmar, the number of grave violations against children has increased significantly since the unlawful military coup in February 2021. The figures and patterns of those violations are extensively documented in the Secretary-General's report. The primary perpetrator affecting children in Myanmar is unequivocally the military junta. Children in Myanmar have been heavily impacted by the junta's widespread atrocities, such as an escalation of indiscriminate area attacks across the country. More than 3.5 million people are currently displaced and more than 20 million people, including 6.3 million children, are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Following the devastating earthquake, the military junta conducted more than 982 area and artillery attacks across the country, killing more than 600 civilians and injuring more than 1,300 people, as well as destroying many healthcare facilities and schools. One of many recent attacks was the area attack by the military junta, on 12 May, on a village school in Depayin, Sagaing region, killing at least 22 schoolchildren, along with their two teachers.

The military junta has consistently denied and obstructed the delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected population. Clearly, children in Myanmar are disproportionately bearing the brunt of the military junta's atrocities and are being deprived of their right to education and health. Food insecurity, malnutrition, a lack of regular vaccination and living under the national poverty line are some of the key factors endangering the life and well-being of our children.

Against that horrific backdrop, the National Unity Government of Myanmar approaches this agenda as one of its top priorities. We are fully committed to upholding the international norms and standards for the protection of children in armed conflict. The National Unity Government has consistently invited the relevant United Nations agencies and international partners to strengthen their cooperation for the sake of ending grave violations against children in Myanmar.

In that regard, I wish to echo the recommendations made by the Secretary-General and stress the following key points to contribute to an effective strategy for ending and preventing such grave violations in Myanmar.

Safe, timely and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance must be ensured. Bearing in mind the politicization and weaponization of humanitarian aid by the military junta, it is imperative that United Nations entities work with reliable local

partners. There is a need to scale up financial support, in particular flexible funding, for the relevant actors and organizations in order to ensure the effective delivery of assistance and the provision of services to those in need. The military junta must be held accountable for its grave violations against children, and its culture of impunity must be brought to an end by actively utilizing the existing international accountability mechanisms and all tools at the disposal of the Security Council and the General Assembly. All measures must be applied to put pressure on the military junta, including by imposing targeted sanctions and stopping the flow of weapons, jet fuel and financial assistance to the military junta. There is a need to work closely with the National Unity Government in its efforts not only to protect children in Myanmar, but also to establish a federal democratic union.

That process constitutes the genuine political path to fulfilling international obligations and to pursuing a better Myanmar that truly serves the interests of its people. Let our children rebuild trust and hope in the United Nations and the international community. The future of Myanmar's children, and indeed that of all children around the world, depend on our collective resolve to ensure their safety, well-being and access to a peaceful environment in which their rights are respected and defended and their future prospers. My appeal to the members of the Security Council and the international community is this: please do not fail the people of Myanmar, especially our children, again. Please act decisively now.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Larsen (Australia): I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and my own country, Australia (CANZ).

CANZ recognizes the efforts of the Special Representative, Mrs. Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, and her Office to protect children affected by armed conflict. The Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2025/247) presents deeply concerning findings: 41,370 grave violations, amounting to a 25 per cent increase, including a 35 per cent rise in rape and other forms of sexual violence. That is unacceptable. Each child killed, maimed, recruited or raped is a victim not only of war, but also of our collective failure to uphold the principles that we claim to defend. CANZ strongly condemns all violations against children by any State or party in any conflict. The report notes that Member State forces were the main perpetrators of killings, maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access. That demands urgent, transparent and meaningful accountability, including justice and reparations.

We are appalled by the escalating violations against children in Ukraine, including attacks on schools and hospitals, and by the denial of aid. We urge Russia to stop those actions, allow humanitarian access in occupied areas and fully cooperate with the United Nations to reunite abducted children with their families.

CANZ reiterates calls for an urgent ceasefire in Gaza and for the immediate release of hostages. All parties must uphold international humanitarian law, including the protection of children. We call on Israel to facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access through a United Nations-led response grounded in humanitarian principles. We call on all parties in Myanmar to prioritize child protection, including by ending forced conscription, abduction and sexual violence. We also condemn the regime's indiscriminate attacks, including air strikes on schools. Recognizing the harm caused by explosive weapons, we urge Member States to implement disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control obligations, including by assessing the risk of arms being used to commit violence against children. CANZ calls on listed non-State armed groups to immediately cease violations against children and respect their special protections.

We remain deeply concerned about the recruitment and use of children by Haitian gangs, and we condemn the grave violations of sexual violence and rape. We welcome the listing of the Viv Ansanm coalition of gangs in the report's annex. Child survivors need long-term, gender- and age-responsive care, including medical, mental health, psychosocial and sexual and reproductive health services. We urge Member States to support that work.

CANZ reaffirms its unwavering commitment to international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law. We call for accountability for violations of those international rules, in particular when such violations affect children, through appropriate national courts or international mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.

Finally, CANZ emphasizes the importance of supporting the United Nations Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism in a transparent, evidence-based listing process in the Secretary-General's report. Perpetrators must be listed according to clear, consistent criteria, with no exceptions or political compromise. Children are not pawns of war. They are our future.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kyrgyzstan.

Mrs. Kasymalieva (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, we commend the presidency of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for convening this important open debate on children and armed conflict. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the briefers for their valuable insights, and the Secretary-General's team for preparing the comprehensive report (S/2025/247).

The Kyrgyz Republic reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the protection of children affected by armed conflict. We underscore the imperative of fully and unconditionally implementing resolution 2427 (2018), and we highlight the importance of a holistic approach that prioritizes not only protection, but also rehabilitation, education, psychological support and the sustainable reintegration of children affected by the conflict.

Preventing the recruitment and use of children by armed groups must remain a key priority. At the national level, the Kyrgyz Republic has accumulated practical experience in that area. Together with the other Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan has actively facilitated the safe return of its citizens, including children, from conflict zones. Since 2021, more than 500 Kyrgyz nationals, primarily women and children, have been successfully repatriated from Iraq and Syria. Those efforts are led by the Government, with the Ministry of Social Welfare playing a central role in ensuring their comprehensive reintegration into society. A tailored rehabilitation programme is being implemented, providing beneficiaries with medical care, psychological support, educational opportunities and social adaptation services.

On the legal front, Kyrgyzstan has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and introduced criminal liability for the recruitment and use of children by armed groups. Drawing from our national experience, the Kyrgyz Republic urges the international community to prioritize the long-term reintegration of children affected by armed conflict. In particular, we emphasize the importance of sustained support for education, vocational training and mental health, along with the provision of financial and technical resources to countries receiving repatriated children.

It is deeply concerning that political tensions and ethnic and religious conflicts often escalate into armed violence, destroying infrastructure, obstructing humanitarian access and, tragically, drawing children into cycles of conflict. Addressing those challenges requires tackling the root causes through investment in

resilient institutions, affordable education, healthcare and social protection systems. We firmly believe that the General Assembly and the Security Council have a vital role in fostering international consensus, enhancing prevention mechanisms and advancing peaceful resolutions. It is acknowledged that prevention is not only more effective, but also less costly than responding to the aftermath of armed conflicts.

In conclusion, the Kyrgyz Republic reiterates its steadfast commitment to international efforts, including those led by the United Nations to protect children affected by armed conflicts and to promote lasting peace, security and development. We express our sincere appreciation to the presidency of Guyana for its leadership in convening this debate and to all briefers for their invaluable contributions. Kyrgyzstan stands ready to further collaborate with all partners to safeguard the rights and future of children worldwide.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Ms. Rahlaga (South Africa): I wish to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the other briefers for their reports. In addition, I wish to acknowledge the importance of this annual debate and its value to this crucial topic.

It is sad and distressing that there has been a 25 per cent surge in the number of grave violations against children since last year. Children are the most vulnerable members of society and are afforded special protections under international humanitarian law. The Secretary-General's report (S/2025/247) casts light on our shame, as the international community, with a reported 41,370 grave violations.

Conflict has been relentless, and children have been unable to escape the indiscriminate violence. The report recognizes the negative role of nine State actors as being responsible for almost 50 per cent of grave violations. Unfortunately, that means that government forces were the main perpetrators of the killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access in 2024. The burden of upholding our obligations under international law rests with States and their governments. Similarly, we should seek accountability from States and actors that violate international law. Unfortunately, the continued grave violations against children have received limited attention and are an indictment of the international community's failure to protect its most vulnerable members of society.

The international community has developed a number of frameworks and conventions that determine the conditions, conduct and execution of warfare with a view to protecting civilians and catering for their humanitarian needs. This includes the unique rights of children and uphold their protection during armed conflicts. South Africa, therefore, remains deeply concerned that perpetrators continue to undermine those provisions and actively harm children. We must protect children through the pursuit of peaceful resolution to conflicts and by addressing the root causes of conflicts. Yet, until this ideal is achieved, we must be pragmatic in ensuring that the most vulnerable are not exposed to the consequences of armed conflict.

Regrettably, it is difficult to read this year's report and not reflect on the unfolding genocide in Gaza and the destruction being wrought by the Israel Defense Forces. The increase in the number of grave violations during 2024 is easily attributable to that unfolding conflict. The data contained in the report also demonstrates a continuous disregard for, and violation of, international law and international humanitarian law by Israeli forces. The horrendous acts of the Israel Defense Forces and its absolute disregard for the lives of Palestinian children prompts feelings of disgrace. Palestinian children have borne the brunt of unprecedented and disproportionate targeted attacks by the Israeli occupying forces. Israel's acts are an egregious violation of international law and international humanitarian law, which cannot be ignored by the international community. The numbers in that report reflect that

reality and further highlight the targeting of humanitarian facilities, which serve to help and protect children. Those actions must cease, and all perpetrators of grievous acts against children must be held accountable for their actions.

The report underscores the alarming increase in violence and the abuse of children in armed conflicts. We emphasize the need for concerted international efforts to protect children's rights and ensure their safety and well-being. The engagement of Governments and armed groups within the United Nations has shown progress, but more robust actions and compliance with international humanitarian law are essential to mitigate those grave violations. We will continue to advocate for prevention strategies that protect children and the inclusion of child protection provisions in peace processes and peace agreements. Importantly, we place significant emphasis on initiatives that focus on demobilizing child soldiers, providing psychosocial support and rehabilitation for affected children and reintegrating them into their communities. It remains imperative for States to pursue and continue efforts to ensure accountability for violations of grievous crimes against children, which would serve as a deterrent.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mrs. González (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay thanks the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for convening this open debate on the issue of children in armed conflict.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict and make the following statement in our national capacity.

We join what I believe is the majority of delegations in expressing concern about the widespread rise in cases of grave violence against children in armed conflict, including killing and maiming, which reached record levels in 2024. In that regard, Uruguay commends the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, and her team, while reaffirming the importance of her mandate and the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, which gives us an insight into the reality behind those stark figures. Once again, Uruguay, together with the European Union, will support the renewal of the Special Representative's mandate in the Third Committee.

The unprecedented statistics reported from the occupied Palestinian territories, in particular Gaza, and from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Myanmar, Haiti, Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere underscore a grim reality: although children do not cause or start wars, they are the ones who bear the brunt of conflicts and will continue to do so throughout their lives. Of particular concern is that while half of the violations were committed by non-State armed groups, government forces were those primarily responsible for the killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian aid. Those acts constitute a violation of all the relevant international humanitarian law treaties. What is more, under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to the best healthcare possible, clean drinking water, healthy food and a clean and safe living environment, and it is the responsibility of Governments to ensure that those rights are fulfilled. The instances of humanitarian aid not reaching its destination are unacceptable, given that food is essential for survival.

In that regard, Uruguay strongly condemns violations and abuses against children in armed conflict and calls on the Security Council and all members to take decisive measures to uphold their rights, prevent and tackle those serious violations, hold the perpetrators accountable and allow unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance. What is happening in Gaza is unacceptable.

Likewise, we also express profound concern about the persistent reports of sexual violence against girls in armed conflict, in particular in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are perpetuating cycles of inequality and standing in the way of gender equality and sustainable development. Similarly, Uruguay regards the 125 per cent rise in cases of sexual violence against boys as deeply regrettable. In that connection, it is crucial to underscore that all Member States must fulfil their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whereby they undertook to bear primary responsibility for protecting, respecting and enforcing the rights of children, in particular during armed conflict.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2025/247), one of the preventive measures that can be taken to protect children in situations of armed conflict is education and training.

Uruguay, as a troop-contributing country with an unwavering commitment to the protection of civilians, has constantly sought to improve the training of deployed officers in order to achieve greater effectiveness in the protection of local populations. It is essential that deployed troops are trained to deal with those scenarios, as mentioned on several occasions by the Special Representative. Sharing that approach, in May the army of Uruguay participated in a basic course held in Colombia with defence and security actors, in which the army was trained in the prevention of the recruitment and use of children in armed forces and armed groups.

In conclusion, Uruguay reaffirms its commitment to make progress in collective measures to ensure the protection of children affected by armed conflict and to provide them with opportunities to rebuild their lives free from the mistakes of conflict and urges the Security Council to take action in that regard.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Alenezi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, namely the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar, the Sultanate of Oman and my country, Kuwait. The group would like to align itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

We are approaching the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), which marked an important step in the provision of protection for children affected by conflict by establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism and a working group to follow up on grave violations.

On this occasion, we emphasize that the time has come to move from developing frameworks towards ensuring and guaranteeing that the commitments are implemented in reality.

The report of the Secretary-General for the year 2024 (S/2025/247) highlights the unprecedented increase in the number of grave violations — 25 per cent — compared to the previous year. There were more than 41,000 violations, the highest number since the establishment of the monitoring mechanism.

In that context, the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf express grave concern over what is happening in several conflict areas, particularly in the Gaza Strip, in terms of systematic violations against children, including deliberate killing and maiming, the targeting of schools and health facilities and the prevention of the entry of humanitarian aid, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law.

We welcome the listing of the Israeli forces as part of the annex to the report, acknowledging the gravity of the violations committed by them and promoting the

principle of accountability. In that regard, we stress the importance of ensuring the independence and integrity of the monitoring mechanism and safeguarding its credibility from all political or selective considerations.

We are gravely concerned by the cases listed in the report of the recurrent use of explosive weapons in populated areas, with their long-term impact on children, including the loss of limbs and disabilities and psychological trauma. In that regard, we reiterate the importance of compliance with international humanitarian law and the importance of strengthening awareness-raising programmes regarding the risk of explosives and mines. These are an integral part of protection efforts, given their vital role in limiting injuries among civilians, increasing social awareness and enabling local communities to take preventive measures, particularly in situations affected by armed conflict.

We also highlight the worrisome increase of 35 per cent in sexual violence against children, including gang rape and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We stress that those violations are also part of the grave violations that were provided for in resolution 1882 (2009). In that regard, we call for means to confront the phenomenon, through enhancing legal accountability, funding gender-sensitive responses, providing psychological support and healthcare services and enabling victims to access justice without fear of reprisal.

In the light of impunity, we call for the strengthening of international and national accountability mechanisms and for all parties to fulfil their obligations in line with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the provision of special protection for children during armed conflicts.

The countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf stress the following points.

First, there must be sufficient support for the reporting and monitoring mechanism, particularly in those contexts that are seeing a full-scale escalation.

Peacebuilding processes and the post-conflict phase must take into account the protection of children, which should not be ignored during transitions or withdrawals of United Nations missions.

Children must be able to fully and unconditionally access humanitarian aid in conflict areas, including food, healthcare and psychosocial support.

There must be sufficient sustained international support for programmes that focus on protecting children and no cuts to budgets should have an impact on such humanitarian priorities.

Our children are not only statistics in reports; they are the core of the future of humankind. Continuing violence against children with impunity is a collective failure that we must not accept.

The countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf stress that we will continue to cooperate with the members of the Council, the United Nations and all partners to end violations against children, to strengthen mechanisms for protection and accountability and to build a world that is fairer and safer for them.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Alqaisi (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): We express our appreciation to the friendly country of Guyana for organizing this important debate that coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). We also thank the briefers for their valuable insights.

This discussion comes at a watershed moment. The most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2025/247) has documented more than 41,000 grave violations

against children in one year — a staggering increase of 25 per cent — reflecting the deteriorating tragedy. At the heart of this grim picture, the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the Gaza Strip, continues to take centre stage in terms of the number of violations, reflecting one of the most brutal injustices in our world today.

Resolution 1612 (2005) was a turning point in terms of the protection of children in conflicts. A series of subsequent resolutions established a comprehensive international framework for that protection.

However, ongoing violations, particularly the targeting of schools, health facilities and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, all underline the need for real accountability and the operationalization of national and international justice mechanisms, rather than only words of condemnation.

We underscore the importance of the Safe Schools Declaration and of ensuring the continuity of education at times of conflict as an indispensable right.

In that context, the Israeli forces are foremost among the parties that committed the most grave violations against children for the second successive year. The listing of those forces in the annex is an important step, but it is insufficient if it is not followed up by clear accountability measures. The Israeli aggression has led to the killing of tens of thousands of Palestinians, the majority of whom are women and children, and the destruction of infrastructure, including educational and health facilities, depriving more than 660,000 children of education, while threatening more than 1 million children with famine. Those facts are not just statistics but rather represent daily human suffering documented by testimonies and United Nations reports.

The need to clarify responsibilities obliges the international community to go beyond condemnation and to take tangible action. Therefore, we repeat and renew our call to the Security Council to impose an immediate cessation of the Israeli war, to end the siege imposed on Gaza and to ensure the urgent and sustainable entry of humanitarian aid in order to put an end to the longest and most destructive war against the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, we reiterate that protecting children from the scourge of war is a condition for achieving a just and comprehensive peace. Jordan reiterates its full support for the mandate of the Special Representative and the independent Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Ms. Williams (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

We commend the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for its leadership as President of the Security Council for the month of June and for convening this important debate on the theme “Children and armed conflict: effective strategies to end and prevent grave violations against children”.

Across multiple conflict-affected regions, attacks on schools, their military use and the denial of humanitarian access have sharply curtailed children’s rights to education and access to food, water and shelter.

Among the many States in conflict, 60 per cent of the population of the Republic of Haiti is under the age of 24. The Secretary-General’s 2025 report (S/2025/247) confirms a 492 per cent increase in verified grave violations against children in Haiti, with 154 verified attacks on schools and hospitals in 2024. Those violations, beyond weapons, are part of a vector that includes illegal narcotics, exploitative extractive practices, depleted ecological conditions and enforced child labour, and

they undermine the right to development in the loss of children's lives and/or youth agency, future productivity and leadership.

CARICOM meets this situation with urgent engagement and highlights five points.

First, children are the most vulnerable to explosive ordinance, including explosive remnants of war and mines, which hit indiscriminately and often years after the conflict has ended. We call on Member States to join and implement the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Secondly, there is a need for targeted support by local and international partners for community child reintegration efforts involving alternative shelter, psychosocial care and safe access to education. And we note, for example, the handover protocol by Haiti's transitional authorities.

Thirdly, we urge Member States to join and fulfil their commitments to the Safe Schools Declaration and to ensure that education in emergencies is funded and protected as a front-line priority.

Fourthly, child protection capacities must be emphasized in mandate renewals and the United Nations country teams. That priority must be recognized, as the monitoring system is under increasing strain. Without sustained visibility, there can be no meaningful accountability. CARICOM regards the protection of children as a core indicator of whether international security frameworks function effectively.

Fifthly, CARICOM calls for the strengthened regional and international enforcement of the Security Council's arms embargo on Haiti and for national capacities for weapons and ammunition management to be strengthened in conflict spaces.

Sixthly, the Security Council is implored to institute sanctions against the financing sources of armies that deploy children.

Eighty-five per cent of global youth are living in developing countries.

In conclusion, the authors of the recently published *Sustainable Development Report 2025* have stated that developing countries have the greatest potential for growth. Yet armed conflict is among the sources of a profound erosion of contributions by future generations to society. CARICOM therefore reaffirms its full support to the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and to the broader agenda to protect children from the elements of armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Haiti.

Mr. Pierre (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): The Republic of Haiti welcomes the Guyanese presidency of the Security Council, which comes to an end at the end of June, and which has been a genuine success. It is to the credit of that fraternal nation that it is bringing its presidency of this important United Nations organ to a close on a theme of utmost importance to all Members of this venerable institution. I am referring to the theme of children and armed conflict.

Over the centuries, children have often been the collateral victims of war, even if major efforts were made to spare them. However, today not only are they not spared, but warlords and even nations are recruiting them to join their troops, training them to become ruthless killers. They are going from being victims to executioners. That must stop.

There are too many child soldiers in the world, too many children suffering from hunger, too many children dragged against their will into armed conflicts, victims of grave violations of their rights.

In Haiti, where we say that nations walk with the feet of their children, child protection has always been a national priority, even though, as a result our endless infighting, that priority has never really received the attention it deserves. Today, with the upsurge of armed gangs on our national territory, the situation of children has become utterly inhumane and untenable.

Aware of that state of affairs, the Transitional Presidential Council has begun to set up programmes to get children out of the clutches of gangs and has worked to reintegrate them into society. Those include special education, protection and nutrition programmes for children in refugee camps and camps for displaced persons.

It would be good if the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti were to add to its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration component a special component for reintegration and child protection, to strengthen education, health and nutrition services. It would also be good if our partners would seriously enforce the arms embargo and step up the sanctions against gangs and their accomplices, while increasing their support to the law and order and security forces.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this important annual open debate. I also thank the briefers for their contributions.

Regrettably, international humanitarian law continues to be systematically and widely violated, and children still bear the brunt of wars they neither started nor ever wanted. Armed conflict endangers the lives and well-being of children while having far-reaching short-term and long-term impacts on their health, education, development and future.

Adherence to international humanitarian law is among the key commitments that should be observed by all to ensure the effective protection of children.

According to United Nations reports, more than 50,000 Palestinian children have been killed or injured by Israel since 2023. The magnitude of the savagery of the Israeli regime is such that, as a result of the killing of children, a new term has emerged — “wounded child, no surviving family” — to refer to Palestinian children left injured, while their parents were killed.

In addition to deliberate attacks by Israeli against children and civilian objects necessary for children, such as schools and hospitals, hundreds of thousands of children have been deliberately deprived of access to food, water, medicine and other basic services. Right now, many of them are being subjected to starvation as a method of warfare by Israel, even as they face the additional risk of being targeted in lines while awaiting humanitarian assistance.

Throughout the past weeks, the world witnessed, in anguish and anger, the same pattern and practice of the Israeli regime killing children, this time in Iran. In the course of the brutal aggression against my country, the regime has deliberately attacked civilians since 13 June, killing dozens of children, including toddlers and babies as young as two months old. The horrific atrocities and the widespread and systematic attack of the occupying regime in the region are increasing. That is a red alert for the international community and demonstrates the serious peril and danger that the Israeli regime poses to the lives, well-being, safety and security of children. Nevertheless, the regime will be held fully accountable for its crimes, in particular the policy and practice of targeting children.

Last week, the Israeli regime was again included in the blacklist of parties that commit grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, an item on the Council’s agenda. While that is an essential initial step, it is neither enough

nor proportionate for stopping the regime's targeting of children. This organ must shoulder its responsibility to save the lives of children as soon as possible and must therefore immediately adopt effective enforcement actions against the child-killing regime of Israel. Moreover, the United States has blocked every Security Council effort to protect Palestinian children. We should not give up in the face of such double standards and hypocrisy. All legal avenues must be exhausted so as to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people, including their children.

In conclusion, I categorically reject the baseless and irrelevant fabrication levelled against my country yesterday in the Chamber by the representative of the child-killing Israeli regime, which had no choice but to resort to spouting lies and misinformation before the Council. But this accusation hardly deserves a response; the facts speak for themselves.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Hajiyev (Azerbaijan): We would like to thank Guyana for convening today's open debate dedicated to the pressing issue of children affected by armed conflict. It is both regrettable and alarming that, according to the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2025/247), violence against children in situations of armed conflict has reached unprecedented levels over the past year. The rising trend of grave violations against children calls for the strict and consistent implementation of international humanitarian law, complemented by obligations under international human rights law.

Azerbaijani citizens, including children, were subjected to numerous war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of genocide and other grave breaches of international humanitarian law during the armed aggression of Armenia in the 1990s. The war claimed the lives of tens of thousands, and more than 1 million people became internally displaced persons and refugees. The armed attacks on civilians and civilian objects in my country in late 2020 further resulted in the deaths of 101 civilians and the injury of 423 civilians, including 12 children. Additionally, about 4,000 persons went missing in connection with the conflict, including more than 70 children.

Furthermore, in violation of international humanitarian law, 267 persons, including 29 children, were taken hostage. Their whereabouts remain unknown. Since the end of the occupation and conflict, 25 mass graves and the remains of 179 individuals have been found. Those graves shed light on the wilful killing of civilians and other protected persons under international humanitarian law. The fate of most of the missing persons has yet to be clarified.

It should be emphasized that impunity for grave violations committed against children in armed conflict remains a matter of serious concern, which necessitates enhancing accountability measures and ensuring justice. Our country has taken decisive steps to investigate and prosecute numerous crimes committed, including those linked to missing persons and children, in full accordance with its legislation and international obligations.

At the same time, the end or cessation of active conflict does not necessarily eliminate threats or alleviate the suffering of children in post-conflict settings. The Secretary-General's report highlights that incidents of children being killed or maimed by landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to occur in appalling numbers. This tragic reality constitutes yet another serious post-conflict humanitarian problem in our country. Since the early 1990s, more than 3,400 people have fallen victim to landmines, including 362 children and young persons. Even since the end of the conflict in 2020, 394 people have become mine victims — of whom 70 were killed and 324 seriously injured, including 14 children and young persons.

It is regrettable that the representative of Armenia, in a statement delivered yesterday, made a reference that is in manifest contradiction with the facts and the ongoing efforts to promote peace and security in our region. Repeating false narratives is counterproductive to the normalization process. We again remind the Council that what was erroneously called Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized sovereign territory. Its legal name is the Karabakh economic region, and it must be referred to as such under international law. The normalization of inter-State relations should proceed on that basis.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to international humanitarian law and international human rights law and remain dedicated to fostering an environment conducive to the protection and development of children, including shielding them from the consequences of armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Monsignor Formica: The Holy See is deeply concerned about the resurgence of armed conflict and the increasing acceptance of force as a means of resolving disputes. These grave developments continue to take the heaviest toll on the most fragile members of society, especially children, whose lives are all too often scarred by the brutality of war and whose dignity and futures are violated and jeopardized. The twentieth anniversary of resolution 1612 (2005) provides an opportunity for reflection and renewed action. It is imperative to recognize that the protection of innocent lives is to be placed above all political, military or strategic considerations. Furthermore, there is an urgency to recommit to the path of dialogue, diplomacy and peace.

The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2025/247) reveals grave concern about a 25 per cent rise in serious violations against children caught in armed conflict over the past year. Too many children continue to suffer recruitment, maiming, abduction and various forms of violence, with many, tragically, losing their lives. Such actions constitute a profound violation of the dignity with which they were endowed by God and an unquestionable infringement of their fundamental right to life.

In that regard, my delegation expresses deep concern about the dire conditions endured by children in densely populated areas affected by armed conflict, in which the use of explosive weapons causes indiscriminate and disproportionate harm. It is particularly alarming that locations that ought to remain inviolable safe havens, such as schools, hospitals and places of worship, are increasingly subjected to attack. Instead of fostering education, healing and spiritual consolation, those spaces are being transformed into sites of devastation and fear. Beyond their immediate physical toll, explosive remnants of war, including landmines, pose long-term threats and inflict deep psychological and emotional trauma.

In view of the urgent need to safeguard the lives and dignity of children affected by armed conflict, my delegation would like to share the following considerations.

First, access to humanitarian assistance must never be impeded. The Holy See strongly condemns any actions or States that obstruct the delivery of vital supplies, such as food, water and medicine, to those in need. Such impediments constitute grave violations of international humanitarian law and also severely compromise the integral human development of children.

Secondly, putting an end to the use, production and stockpiling of indiscriminate weapons, particularly in populated areas, is a vital step towards limiting the harm inflicted on children. In that regard, the Holy See renews its call for all Member States that have not yet done so to accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and to endorse the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences

Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. Now is the time for a renewed commitment to protecting the most vulnerable, not for withdrawal from existing obligations.

Thirdly, my delegation encourages the Council to make effective use of all available mechanisms to advance the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda, including the work of its dedicated Working Group. Protecting children affected by armed conflict must remain a core priority for the United Nations and must be reflected in the ongoing review of the peacebuilding architecture.

The Holy See cannot remain silent in the face of the terrorist attack that took place at the Mar Elias Greek Orthodox Church in Damascus on 22 June 2025, and it expresses its profound concern and unequivocal condemnation of the attack. The Holy See calls on the Council to address the persecution of Christians and take action against Christianophobia.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Vichankaiyakij (Thailand): Thailand remains deeply concerned about the devastating impact of armed conflict on children caused by all forms of violence. We are particularly alarmed by the high number of children around the world who are raped, sexually abused, killed or maimed as a result of armed deployments and explosive ordnance, including landmines and other explosive weapons.

The indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in populated areas remains a serious and pressing concern. Children are disproportionately affected, and places that should provide safety, such as homes, schools and playgrounds, are turned into danger zones, severely undermining children's safety, well-being and overall development. In recognition of those grave humanitarian consequences, Thailand endorsed the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas in January 2025. We also wish to urge a stronger protection of civilians, especially children, from the impact resulting from the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas amid armed conflicts worldwide.

In response, Thailand underscores the urgent need to strengthen humanitarian assistance to ensure timely and sustained access to medical care, rehabilitation and psychosocial support in order to alleviate the suffering of children affected by explosive ordnance and sexual abuse. Equally important is the provision of risk education to children, families and communities residing in or returning to contaminated areas. Raising awareness of the dangers of landmines and explosive remnants of war is crucial to preventing further casualties and fostering a safer environment. In support of post-conflict recovery efforts, Thailand has placed a strong emphasis on victim assistance, international cooperation and assistance and capacity-building, as demonstrated in our active participation as a State party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

It is tragic to note that sexual violence against children, including rape and sexual assault, is widespread and a rising trend in armed conflict. It leaves the devastating and damaging consequences to victims, in particular boys and girls. Those actions are in violation of human rights law and international humanitarian law. It is important that the international community jointly calls for all parties involved in armed conflict to put an end to using sexual violence as tactic of war and to emphasize accountability. It is equally important to strengthen protection and response mechanisms with adequate resources and personnel. That will contribute to preventing all forms of sexual violence against children, providing timely assistance and medical care in cases involving severe health consequences, providing appropriate redress to victims and promoting their dignity and rights.

With respect to United Nations peacekeeping missions, we wish to share that the presence of women peacekeepers and women officers in armed conflict situations could be an essential contributing factor to building safety, security and trust in affected communities, in particular among women and girls.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Jorjoliani (Georgia): At the outset, I wish to thank the presidency of Guyana for convening this important debate, and I confirm our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2025/247).

The recent report paints a grim reality. Children are disproportionately affected by ongoing hostilities and violations of international law. The continued use of explosive weapons in populated areas, attacks on schools and hospitals and the rise in sexual violence demand urgent and coordinated action.

My delegation fully shares the concerns raised about the alarming extent and gravity of violations against children in armed conflict. Georgia underscores the urgent need to strengthen adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to those instruments and to international initiatives, such as the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers. We believe that the existing legal frameworks must be complemented by robust enforcement and political will to drive meaningful change. We support efforts to strengthen accountability for grave violations against children. We also recognize the role of international and regional mechanisms in advancing justice and deterrence.

Allow me to draw the Council's attention to the ongoing humanitarian and human rights situation in the Russian-occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. There, conflict-affected people, including children, face persistent and grave violations of their fundamental rights. One of the most blatant violations is the prohibition of education in the native Georgian language. In addition, children regularly face restrictions on freedom of movement, limited access to healthcare and other forms of discrimination. Those abuses underscore the urgent need for international and regional human rights monitoring mechanisms to gain access to the occupied territories. Here, let me recall the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights that have confirmed the responsibility of the Russian Federation for the occupation and human rights violations in both Georgian regions. We reiterate our call upon the Russian Federation to start fulfilling its international obligations, first and foremost under the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008.

In conclusion, let me underline that protecting children during armed conflict is not just a legal obligation but also a moral obligation for humankind. Georgia remains fully committed to working with the United Nations and international partners to contribute to that end.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al Nahhas (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by welcoming the Minister of Human Services and Social Security of the friendly State of Guyana to the Security Council to preside over its work. I would like to commend the delegation of Guyana for the excellent stewardship of the Council's work this month.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Arab States, and we would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.

Yesterday, the Council heard a briefing by Sila, a Syrian civil society representative, whom I thank for her briefing. I will begin my statement where she left off, when she called on the international community to work to remove mines so that we can replace the word “war” with “life”, “rubble” with “home” and “displacement” with “return”. Over the past 14 years, Syrian children have endured the scourge of war, violence, fear and displacement, becoming refugees and orphans. Some have suffered the privations of life in camps, while others have perished, have sustained serious injuries or are permanently disabled as a result of military action, mines and unexploded remnants of war.

Today, as Syria strives to turn the page on pain and suffering and to build a better future for all its children, at the forefront of its priorities are children’s recovery and their enjoyment of their right to life, childhood, education and healthcare and the right to be raised according to sound values, far from violence, hate speech, discrimination and prejudice. We are doing so in the firm belief that it is first and foremost children who bear the brunt of conflict, while also representing the future, which must be forged in the present. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its unwavering commitment to human rights instruments, including the rights of the child, condemns in the strongest terms all six violations of children’s rights and calls unequivocally for the perpetrators of such violations to be held accountable and for them not to go unpunished. Shielding children from the scourge of conflict and guaranteeing them a secure future remains a non-negotiable national priority.

The Syrian Government believes in the importance of constructive cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies. It values its close partnership with UNICEF and the role played by other international organizations in supporting our national efforts to protect and care for children and to promote human rights. The Government has taken the initiative to cooperate with our international Organization and its mechanisms, including those concerned with human rights, and commissions of inquiry. It has helped to facilitate their work out of a firm belief in the importance of transparency and accountability. In that connection, we would welcome a visit by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mrs. Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, to Syria, and we await her response so that a date can be set.

Syria is currently undergoing a period of transition — one in which hope abounds, as do challenges, some of which are taking a toll on children and hampering efforts to meet their basic needs and provide the services that they and their families require. The Syrian Government looks forward to support from the United Nations and its Member States in its efforts in the areas of humanitarian aid, development and reconstruction, support for the education sector and healthcare for children and mothers. There is a need to step up efforts to end the inhumane conditions in Al-Hol camp and other camps in north-eastern Syria and for the countries concerned to repatriate their nationals and work to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into their communities in line with international human rights standards.

For its part, the Syrian Government is working to reform and develop government institutions and structures, reinforce their work and address the shortcomings and obstacles afflicting the legal and administrative system inherited from the previous regime. Those efforts encompass the judicial system, with the aim of ensuring its independence and upholding the rule of law. The Syrian Government is also working in partnership with the relevant authorities, experts and stakeholders to fully rebuild the legal framework and the judicial system — an endeavour that will take time if considered and judicious measures are to be made in the national interest and the aspirations of Syrians are to be met, not least given the start of elections to the Syrian People’s Assembly.

Children living under occupation are more vulnerable than others to the six grave violations. That is clear in occupied Palestine and in the documented crimes that are being committed on a daily basis against the children of Gaza and in the occupied

Syrian Golan, where 12 Syrian children were martyred last year in the village of Majdal Shams and in areas affected by the Israeli occupation forces' incursion after 8 December 2024, in flagrant violation of international law, United Nations resolutions and the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Dozens have been killed, children were orphaned, and fear and destruction have spread. Syria underscores the need to stop Israel's aggression and practices and to end its occupation of Arab territories.

In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its full commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to all human rights violations, wherever they occur, and places the accountability of the perpetrators of such violations at the forefront of its national priorities, in line with the principles of justice and the rule of law. It does so out of a belief that the defence of human rights is the foundation for a stable and tolerant society. Syria is determined to play a positive role in all regional and international initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of the child.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Czechia.

Mr. Kulháněk (Czechia): First of all, let me thank you, Madam President, and Guyana for organizing this important meeting.

My country aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict.

I now would like to say a few words in my national capacity.

We thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2025/247), and we thank the Office of Special Representative Gamba de Potgieter and other United Nations entities for their work.

The findings of a record high number of grave violations against children verified in 2024, including the shocking 35 per cent increase in sexual violence, are deeply distressing. We strongly condemn such heinous acts. Those are not just statistics. They are the shattered lives of children who should be learning, playing and growing up in safety.

We are alarmed by the continued violations committed by the Russian Federation in Ukraine, including attacks on civilian infrastructure, schools and residential areas, such as the kindergarten in Kyiv and the maternity hospital in Odesa during massive Russian drone assaults earlier this month. We also condemn the abduction and illegal transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia as a blatant violation of international law and support the International Criminal Court's investigations.

The report also highlights grave violations committed in Israel and Gaza, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Nigeria and Haiti, where children are being killed, maimed, raped or recruited by armed groups. Those crises demand our collective attention and action. Czechia calls for the full accountability, investigation and prosecution of those responsible and for cooperation with international justice mechanisms. All parties to conflict should adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect the civilian population, especially children, from war. Parties must make every effort to prevent grave violations, including through the implementation of joint action plans with the United Nations. We fully support the existing United Nations Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on children and armed conflict, and we call on the Security Council to take action to address the situation of conflict-affected children and to work closely with the Special Representative, including on specific country situations.

Let us be clear: the war on children must end, and the global rise in grave child rights violations demands urgent action. Czechia stands ready to work with all partners to ensure that no child is left behind in the shadow of armed conflicts.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.