



PERMANENT MISSION OF HUNGARY
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Statement by
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Permanent Representative

on the occasion of

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict

23 June 2020

Mr President,
Honorable Members of the Security Council,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Hungary wishes to thank France for providing the opportunity to reflect on this crucial topic. We also thank Executive Director Henrietta Fore, Special Representative Virginia Gamba and Mariam from civil society for their presentations, as well as the Secretary General for the annual report on this important issue.

Hungary aligns itself with the statement submitted by the European Union, and with the message conveyed on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, of which Hungary is an active member.

Mr. President,

It is clear that we still have tremendous work ahead of us to bring meaningful progress. This year, as we celebrate the 15th anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 1612 on Children and Armed Conflict, Hungary reaffirms its steadfast support for the CAAC agenda. Hungary is a State Party to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and its *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, and is committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. We endorsed the *Paris Principles and Commitments on protection of children from recruitment*, as well as the *Vancouver Principles on child protection in peacekeeping*, and we encourage all Member States to do the same. This year also marks the 15th anniversary of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which creates an important momentum to strengthen linkages between these agendas.

These key instruments have crucial relevance during the current situation, when the world is facing the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, and when atrocities and violence are also on the rise. We are highly concerned that, amidst the current health crisis, an alarming number of children are in situations of extreme vulnerability, especially those who are already living in a dire humanitarian situation. Children are our future, our new generation, who we need to protect and empower. The pandemic gives us clarity and opportunity to reaffirm our cooperation and engagement to fight for our children, and to assume more responsibility to take all necessary measures to this end. Hungary welcomes the Secretary General's leadership in this regard, and supports the Secretary General's *Call for global ceasefire, Call for peace in homes* and on *Prioritizing Children's Safety, Education amid COVID-19 Pandemic*.

The Secretary-General's latest report highlights more than 25,000 grave violations perpetrated against children in 2019. As Special Representative Gamba indicated, the total number of cases is similarly high as in previous years, and, although there has been a decrease in the number of cases falling within four categories among the six grave violations against children set out in Resolution 1612 - killing and maiming, recruitment or use of children as soldier, abduction, denial of humanitarian access -, in the remaining two categories, namely sexual violence against children and attacks against school and hospitals, the numbers have increased. We must recognize the urgency of addressing these alarming trends, which have no place in the 21st century.

Therefore, we call on the international community, including Member States, as well as non-state actors, to uphold international human rights and humanitarian law, and urge the Security Council to maximize the tools at its hand to prevent, eliminate and persecute violations of child rights, which includes hearing from survivors and civil society, incorporating the CAAC agenda across its work, and ensuring the inclusion of an adequate child protection function in UN peacekeeping mandates. Retaining capacity, expertise and funding for child protection functions in Missions is necessary to ensure that the UN can deliver on these important mandates.

Mr. President,

Hungary deems that reintegration programs for children formerly associated with armed groups are highly important, including mental health and psychosocial support, education, training, and access to justice. We agree with the Secretary General's findings that only comprehensive programs can break the cycle of stigmatization, poverty and create opportunities that prevent the recruitment and re-recruitment of children. Access, monitoring, strong cooperation between the actors and accountability are all key for prevention.

We need to protect schools, students and teachers from attacks, which does not only ensure their safety today, but is also a key to securing the future of societies, and especially those affected by armed conflict. Hungary is strongly convinced that education is the cornerstone of lasting peace. To this end, Hungary introduced the Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Program in 2013, which funds a full cycle of tertiary education in Hungary for international students from around the world. In the framework of the program, about 5,000 foreign students study in Hungary every year, a large percentage of whom come from conflict-affected regions.

The persecution of minorities around the world, many of whom are children, is of special concern for Hungary. In this regard, we are engaged in helping children belonging to the Christian minority: the Government of Hungary launched a Scholarship Programme for young Christians experiencing persecution and discrimination, with an amount of 4,950,000 USD for the period 2016-2019. Furthermore, the Government provides humanitarian aid to restore educational and health infrastructures in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Nigeria, among others.

Mr President,

The world was shaken this year by the COVID-19 pandemic; however, now, more than ever, we must continue to raise our voice and take action against violence against children in armed conflict. We must strengthen coordination and cooperation between Member States, international organizations, civil society and all relevant stakeholders to save our children's lives, protect their rights, make them thrive, and thus pave the way for a new, happier generation in the future.

We call on Members of the Security Council to keep this important issue on the Council's agenda as a matter of high priority.

Thank you for your kind attention.