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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

Summary

In the present report, which covers the period from December 2023 to December 2024, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict explores challenges in ending and preventing grave violations against children and strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict. She outlines the activities carried out in discharging her mandate, the challenges faced, issues of concern and progress achieved in addressing grave violations against children. The Special Representative also lays out her advocacy activities, including through her focus on lessons learned and best practices. She provides information on her field visits and efforts to build partnerships, including with regional organizations and international partners. The Special Representative further outlines priorities and makes recommendations to enhance the protection of children affected by conflict.



I. Introduction

1. The present report, covering the period from December 2023 to December 2024, is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/187, in which the Assembly requested the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to submit a report to the Human Rights Council on the activities undertaken in the fulfilment of her mandate, including information on her field visits and the progress achieved and the challenges remaining on the children and armed conflict agenda. The Special Representative also elaborates on her activities regarding the request of the Assembly, in its resolution 72/245, to increase her engagement with States, United Nations bodies and agencies and regional and subregional organizations and to increase public awareness activities, including by collecting, assessing and disseminating best practices and lessons learned. The report further highlights worrying trends observed by the Special Representative in the fulfilment of her mandate and analyses areas of concern requiring further attention to better protect conflict-affected children.

II. Working with United Nations human rights mechanisms

2. During the reporting period, regular communication between the Special Representative and the Human Rights Council continued with regard to violations of the rights of conflict-affected children. In March 2024, the Special Representative presented her annual report to the Council.¹ The Office of the Special Representative provided background information on children and armed conflict for 17 thematic or country resolutions of the Council.

3. The Office of the Special Representative continued to support the universal periodic review process by providing information on progress and challenges in ending and preventing grave violations against children in countries on the children and armed conflict agenda. The Office provided input for the universal periodic reviews of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Iraq and shared recommendations from the universal periodic review process pertaining to countries on the children and armed conflict agenda with the United Nations on the ground.

4. The Special Representative sustained her engagement with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council to exchange information and identify common areas of concern. Among the thematic mandate holders, she met with the Chair of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. The Special Representative and her Office also met with country mandate holders, including the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia and the Designated Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti. Her Office provided input for relevant reports of special procedures mandate holders, including the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, in May 2024, the report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in June 2024 and the report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, in November 2024. In October 2024, the Office of the Special Representative, in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, published a research study entitled “Child trafficking and armed conflict”. With regard to exchanges with United Nations-mandated commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and investigations, the Special Representative and her Office met with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and

¹ [A/HRC/55/57](#).

Israel, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan.

5. The Office of the Special Representative and the Committee on the Rights of the Child formalized their cooperation in September 2024 through a memorandum of understanding. The Committee continued to raise the situation of children affected by armed conflict during the reviews of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by States parties. The Office continued to cooperate with the Committee in that regard, including by providing input to the Committee's country-specific concluding observations on Burkina Faso, Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Israel and Pakistan, and to work with the United Nations on the ground to support the implementation of concluding observations pertaining to countries on the children and armed conflict agenda. In August 2024, the Office contributed to the Committee's draft general comment No. 27 on children's rights to access to justice and effective remedies. Subsequent to the Committee's decision No. 18 on implementation of the simplified procedure for reports to the Committee, the Office provided input to the Committee's standard questions for the initial reports on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In March and June 2024, the Special Representative met with the Chair of the Committee and, in June 2024, her Office provided a briefing to Committee members on the children and armed conflict mandate. In September 2024, the Special Representative and the Committee issued a press release expressing their alarm at the execution of four young people in Somalia for crimes committed as minors and, in November 2024, the Special Representative and the Chair of the Committee issued a press release to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6. The Special Representative also engaged with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In March 2024, the Office of the Special Representative provided a briefing to the Committee on the impact of armed conflict on children with disabilities in view of the development of its general comment on persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. In June 2024, the Special Representative spoke at a round table on that topic held in the framework of the seventeenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

7. The Special Representative strengthened her cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In March 2024, she met with the High Commissioner. In February 2024, the Office of the Special Representative provided input to the High Commissioner's study on solutions to promote digital education for young people and to ensure their protection from online threats. Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 54/5 on ensuring quality education for peace and tolerance for every child, her Office participated in an informal expert group meeting in September 2024 and contributed, in November 2024, to a report on accessible, inclusive, equitable and quality education for peace and tolerance for every child, especially children in the most vulnerable situations. Pursuant to Council resolution 55/29 on the rights of the child: realizing the rights of the child and inclusive social protection, in which the Council requested the Office of the High Commissioner to prepare a report on the rights of the child and violations of the human rights of children in armed conflicts, the Office of the Special Representative has been holding regular exchanges with the Office of the High Commissioner to that end. In the framework of the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights, the Office of the Special Representative took part in the work of the task teams responsible for the implementation of the Agenda for Protection and the Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Child Rights Mainstreaming. With regard to the Guidance Note, in November 2024, the Office of the Special Representative contributed to the report of the High Commissioner on child rights mainstreaming across the United Nations, pursuant to Council resolution 55/29 on the rights of the child, including on the implementation of the Guidance Note.

8. In August 2024, the Office of the Special Representative participated in the Geneva Policy Workshop on Children and Armed Conflict, organized by Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict and the Geneva Human Rights Platform, which focused on strengthening coordination between Geneva- and New York-based mechanisms.

9. The Special Representative's Europe Liaison Office, based in Brussels, facilitated her engagement with Geneva-based human rights mechanisms.

III. Trends, progress and issues of concern in the protection of conflict-affected children

A. Trends in grave violations against children

10. The latest annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, issued in June 2024,² covered 25 situations and one regional monitoring arrangement. The report highlighted that the United Nations verified 32,990 grave violations against children in 2023. A total of 22,557 children (15,847 boys; 6,252 girls; 458 sex unknown) were victims of at least one of the four grave violations affecting individual children: recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; and abduction. The situations with the highest numbers of children affected were in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Nigeria and the Sudan.

11. A total of 11,649 children, of whom almost 30 per cent were girls, were killed and maimed by parties to armed conflict. The armed conflicts in which the highest numbers of children were killed and maimed were in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine. In the majority of cases, the use of explosive ordnance, including explosive weapons and remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and landmines, including in populated areas, caused the killing and maiming of children.

12. In 2023, 8,655 children were recruited and used, and 4,356 children were abducted, with the highest numbers verified in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Nigeria. Almost 40 per cent of the abductions affected girls. In addition, 2,491 children were detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, or for national security reasons.

13. With 1,650 incidents verified, attacks on schools and hospitals and their protected personnel remained concerning in 2023, in particular in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Ukraine, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan.

14. Rape and other forms of sexual violence affected 1,470 children. More than 90 per cent of verified incidents of sexual violence were perpetrated against girls, although incidents of sexual violence against boys also increased. Sexual violence continued to be vastly underreported owing to stigmatization, fear of reprisals, harmful social norms the absence or lack of access to services and impunity and safety concerns.

15. In 2023, 5,205 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified. The highest numbers of denials of humanitarian access were verified in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Mali, Myanmar, Ukraine and Yemen.

16. Assessing grave violations committed against children in his above-mentioned annual report on children and armed conflict, the Secretary-General has decided to list several additional parties to conflict in the annexes to his report and to add violations for parties to conflict that had been previously listed. More information can be found under section 5 of his annual report.³

17. In 2024, violence against children in armed conflict continued at extreme levels. Tens of thousands of children continued to be affected by armed conflict across the globe, suffering abhorrent abuses and violations of their most basic rights. Children were severely affected by multiplying and escalating conflicts that were marked by a complete disregard for child rights, in particular the inherent right to life, and by chronic humanitarian crises. In some situations, relapse into or escalation of conflict had devastating impacts on children and their communities. The splintering of existing or emergence of new armed actors, intercommunal violence, the spreading of hostilities, as well as the use of explosive weapons and presence of explosive remnants of war, contributed to high levels of grave violations against children.

² [A/78/842-S/2024/384](#).

³ *Ibid.*, sect. V.

18. In the first half of 2024, the United Nations verified over 18,000 grave violations against children. Nearly 12,000 children were victims of at least one of the four grave violations affecting individual children: recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; and abduction. The highest numbers of violations were the killing and maiming of children, followed by the recruitment and use of children and the denial of humanitarian access to children. The first half of 2024 saw children being killed and maimed in unprecedented numbers in the Sudan, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Myanmar, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Ukraine. Moreover, most cases of recruitment and use were verified in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, Mozambique, the Syrian Arab Republic and Colombia. Access challenges hindered the monitoring and reporting of grave violations as well as the provision of services to conflict-affected children. The highest numbers of denials of humanitarian access were verified in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Haiti, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Mali.

B. Progress in ending and preventing grave violations against children

19. The Special Representative and the United Nations country task forces on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in armed conflict continued their engagement with parties to armed conflicts, with a view to adopting concrete measures to end and prevent grave violations. This engagement took place against the backdrop of drawdowns of peace operations and special political missions and diminishing child protection capacities, including situations of great hardship for United Nations personnel and for aid workers. The continuous engagement of the United Nations, including through the adoption and implementation of action plans with government forces and armed groups, led to progress to end and prevent grave violations.

20. In the Central African Republic, in September 2024, the Government and the United Nations signed a handover protocol on the protection and transfer of children associated with armed forces and groups to civilian authorities.

21. In Colombia, engagement continued between the Government, the United Nations, civil society organizations and the international community for the prevention of and response to grave violations against children. In January 2024, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling calling on the armed forces and the police to refrain from conducting civil-military activities involving children in conflict-affected areas. The ceasefire extension of February 2024 included the commitment by both parties not to use children below the age of 15 in armed conflict, including in intelligence and hostilities, as part of the ceasefire protocol.

22. In March 2024, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed a decree regarding a military and police code of conduct and ethics for the armed forces, in which child protection was mainstreamed. The Government continued its efforts in the fight against impunity as part of the continued implementation of the 2012 action plan. During the reporting period, the armed groups Mouvement national congolais, Forces populaires pour la libération in South Kivu and Union des forces pour la défense patriotique congolaise in North Kivu signed unilateral declarations to end and prevent grave violations against children. A total of about 700 children were released from armed groups following United Nations engagement.

23. In January 2024, the Government of Haiti and the United Nations signed a handover protocol for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed gangs to civilian child protection actors.

24. In Myanmar, engagement between the Myanmar armed forces and the United Nations continued in the context of the joint action plan signed in 2012 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Myanmar armed forces, including to jointly review 120 cases of underage recruitment, with a view of releasing children or adults recruited as children. An initial group comprising 83 persons was released.

25. In January 2024, the Government of Nigeria adopted an implementation plan for the 2022 handover protocol for children encountered in military operations. In addition, the Civilian Joint Task Force, with the support of the United Nations, continued the implementation of the 2017 action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, including through child protection training for its cadres.

26. In March 2024, the Congress of the Philippines filed a proposal for the adoption of a Magna Carta of Children Act, under which it would provide guarantees under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and establish a Philippine Commission on Children. In May 2024, the Department of Social Welfare and Development held a workshop on the peace programme for children involved in armed conflict, with the aim of improving support services.

27. In Somalia, the Federal Government and federal member states continued to engage with the United Nations on the implementation of the two 2012 action plans on ending the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children and the 2019 road map signed to expedite implementation of the action plans. Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland and South-West States approved State-level plans to advance the implementation of the 2019 road map to strengthen the protection of children in the respective regions. Close to 500 children formerly associated with armed forces and groups and other vulnerable children at risk of recruitment are benefitting from reintegration programmes across Somalia.

28. In South Sudan, subsequent to United Nations engagement, some 60 children were released from armed groups and the national police service.

29. In the Syrian Arab Republic, in June 2024, the United Nations signed an action plan with the opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, and its aligned legions and factions, to end and prevent the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children. Engagement between the United Nations and the Government on the development of a comprehensive action plan continued throughout the reporting period.

30. In Ukraine, the Government extended by one year the joint prevention plan it signed with the United Nations in August 2023 to end and prevent grave violations against children in Ukraine. Its implementation is ongoing. The Government of the Russian Federation continued to engage with the Special Representative to end and prevent grave violations against children in Ukraine, with practical prevention measures reported by the Russian Federation.

31. In Yemen, the Government continued to engage with the United Nations on the implementation of the 2014 action plan and the 2018 road map to end and prevent child recruitment and use, including the establishment of child protection units in all military regions, and the conduct of field visits to disseminate directives banning child recruitment and verify the absence of children from military ranks. In February 2024, the Joint Technical Committee endorsed standard operating procedures to provide interim care for children released or separated from armed groups. The Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah) continued engagement with the United Nations with regard to the 2022 action plan to protect children and prevent grave violations against children in the context of the armed conflict in Yemen, including through the identification of priority activities.

C. Issues of continuing concern in ending and preventing grave violations against children

32. In recent years, some trends and harmful practices have taken a worrying hold, including the denial of humanitarian access to children, as well as attacks on schools and associated personnel, impacting children's right to education. Furthermore, obstacles to the effective registration of children at birth have continued to have a detrimental effect on the protection of conflict-affected children and on the fulfillment of their rights.

Denial of humanitarian access

33. From 2022 to 2023, denial of humanitarian access increased by over 32 per cent, often coinciding with an escalation in other grave violations. For 2024, denial of humanitarian

access is expected to deteriorate in several contexts, given the adoption of restrictive regulations that increase control over humanitarian organizations and personnel, notably in Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Sudan. This builds on the upward trend, observed since 2019, in verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access reported in the annual reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. Safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access is a prerequisite for effective humanitarian action.

34. Subsequent to calls from Member States, the Office of the Special Representative developed a guidance note during the reporting period to enhance the monitoring and reporting on the denial of humanitarian access to children in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, in consultation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

35. The guidance note was informed by in-depth field-based research in 19 countries on the children and armed conflict agenda, including field travel to Libya and South Sudan, as well as expert interviews. The research confirmed the need for greater clarity in understanding the denial of humanitarian access. In response, the guidance note clarifies the definition of this grave violation, sets out a number of different context-specific examples, categorizes incidents and addresses reporting challenges.

36. The user-friendly field-based guidance note will be made publicly available in 2025. This tool will provide country task forces on monitoring and reporting, with concrete operational guidance on the many components and different expressions of the denial of humanitarian access within the children and armed conflict agenda, which, in turn, will enhance monitoring and reporting capacities in countries on the children and armed conflict agenda. This will allow country task forces to also be better equipped to mitigate the impact of the denial of humanitarian access on children, thus providing improved child protection outcomes and safeguarding their rights.

Attacks on schools and the right to education

37. The right to education is a fundamental human right. Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. It is key for the development of children and also critical for peacebuilding and for the sustainable development of society as a whole. In times of conflict, attacks on and obstacles to safe access to schools, threats to children and teachers and the military use of schools have a negative impact, reaching beyond the education sector, and may amount to a violation of the right to education. Not only is there a large financial cost to rebuilding schools, repairing infrastructure, replacing equipment and training new teachers, there is also a significant individual and societal cost. The loss of educational opportunities owing to war makes children more vulnerable to other grave violations and has long-lasting effects on their social and economic development and on that of their communities, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of new cycles of violence and conflict. In conflict situations, education is particularly important to promote respect, tolerance and understanding, which are vital for social reconstruction and cohesion. Education also helps mitigate the psychological and social impacts of conflict by creating a sense of normality, stability, structure and hope.

38. Schools are protected as civilian objects under international humanitarian law. In addition, children have a right to education in accordance with article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Thus far, 120 countries have made additional political commitments to protect students, teachers and schools from the worst effects of armed conflict by endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration. Furthermore, Member States have committed, under Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. On multiple occasions, including in its resolution 1998 (2011), the Security Council has condemned attacks and threats of attacks against schools and hospitals, as well as protected persons in relation to them, and urged all parties to conflict to immediately cease such attacks and threats of attacks and to refrain from actions that impede access to education. Most recently, in its resolution 2601 (2021), the Security Council made explicit the link between education, peace and security. In its resolution 53/7 on the right to

education, the Human Rights Council reaffirmed the above-mentioned legal obligations and political engagements and, in its resolution 54/5 on ensuring quality education for peace and tolerance for every child, the Council recognized the fundamental contribution of the enjoyment of the right to education to the achievement of peace and security.

39. As the right to education of hundreds of thousands of children in conflict-affected countries is being disrupted, the Office of the Special Representative and the United Nations on the ground continued to engage with parties to armed conflict on the protection of education and to monitor and report on attacks on schools as well as on their military use. Over the years and despite the above-mentioned frameworks adopted to reaffirm the commitment of Member States to the protection of children's right to education, the number of attacks on schools and hospitals, and related personnel, identified by the Security Council as one of the six grave violations against children in armed conflict, have remained consistently high. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2601 (2021) until 2023, attacks on schools increased, shockingly, by nearly 60 per cent. Girls' education has frequently been targeted because of harmful gender norms, including through attacks on girls' schools and the abduction of girls at school or on the way to school. Beyond gender, other factors such as age, ethnicity, race, and disability were determining factors in adversely shaping the vulnerability of children to this violation. Attacks against schools and related personnel have continued to be of extreme concern in 2024, particularly in Ukraine, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Haiti, Cameroon, Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Sudan. Government forces remained the main perpetrators of such attacks, which have often been linked to an increasing use of airstrikes and explosive weapons in populated areas.

Birth registration and conflict-affected children

40. Every child has the right to be registered at birth according to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Convention of the Rights of the Child also reaffirms the right of all children to be registered immediately after birth and the right from birth to a name and requires States to undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations, as recognized by law. Furthermore, under the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), States committed to register all children within their jurisdiction and, under target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration. The importance of birth registration has been recognized by the Human Rights Council on several occasions, including in its resolution 52/25 on birth registration and the right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

41. Registration at birth is the first legal acknowledgement of a child's existence; without proof of identity a child is invisible. Registration entitles children to their rights and helps build a protective environment against abuse, exploitation and violence, especially during and after disasters or conflicts when the State, community and social structures break down.⁴ The fulfilment of the right to be registered at birth is closely linked to the realization of many other rights and is a key tool to prevent grave violations against children and to ensure their protection during conflicts.

42. Unregistered children are more likely to be vulnerable to grave violations during armed conflict as they are unable to prove that they are below the age of 18 and hence entitled to special protection. They are more likely to be recruited and used, abducted, raped and subjected to other forms of sexual violence by parties to armed conflict, to be excluded from services such as schools and hospitals and to be denied humanitarian access. The lack of documentation also poses a major obstacle for children formerly associated with armed forces or groups in accessing health services and education and may negatively impact their reintegration and well-being over the long-term. In addition, they may be detained and/or prosecuted as adults for their association with parties to armed conflict, instead of being considered as victims. Lack or loss of legal identity and documentation also make it extremely difficult for such children to access justice systems and seek redress for crimes of which they were victims. Displaced, unaccompanied and separated children, as well as other

⁴ Birth registration in emergencies: a review of best practices in humanitarian action (2014).

vulnerable children, may also be at higher risk of losing their documentation, sometimes compounded by natural disasters such as floods resulting in loss of identity cards or birth certificates, hindering their access to the specialized services they often require.

43. According to UNICEF, one child in 4 under the age of 5 lacks a birth certificate because the parents could not afford a certificate, could not obtain a certificate or faced other barriers to learning about and gaining access to registration services. The lack of legal documentation was particularly of concern in several situations covered by the children and armed conflict mandate, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Niger, Somalia and the Sudan. As a result, children were more vulnerable to grave violations, as well as to detention for alleged association with armed groups. In Mali, for example, the release of children from detention remained hampered by the lack of valid civil documentation to prove their age.

44. The Special Representative has advocated for the right to birth registration for conflict-affected children and encouraged age assessment procedures as a mitigation measure to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. In particular, she has urged parties to conflicts in Afghanistan, Mali, Mozambique, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic to adopt age assessment mechanisms to that end. In Iraq, as part of its action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, the Popular Mobilization Forces adopted age assessment procedures. In Somalia, in the context of its action plan to end the recruitment and use of children and its road map for implementation, the Federal Government endorsed age assessment guidelines and a standardized checklist. Finally, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Special Representative commended the cooperation between the Government and the United Nations on screening and age assessment, leading to the separation of children from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese National Police.

IV. Raising awareness, mobilizing global action and building partnerships

A. Awareness raising including through field visits

45. The Special Representative continued to use her voice to raise awareness about the protection of children's rights in armed conflict, including through press releases and public statements. For example, in March 2024, she issued a statement on the urgent need to protect children in Haiti and, in October 2024, she called for an immediate cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon.

46. The Special Representative engaged the media in advocacy efforts, including through national and international media outlets, such as *El Pais*, *La Nacion*, United Nations News and the Qatar News Agency. In October 2024, her Analysis and Outreach Hub in Doha organized a workshop for journalists and in December 2024 her Europe Liaison Office briefed journalists to raise awareness on the issue of children and armed conflict.

47. The Special Representative sought to inform diverse audiences, including by meeting with Members of the European Parliament, as well as parliamentarians from Denmark, Greece, Liechtenstein and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

48. She continued to take part in high-level events to raise awareness about the plight of conflict-affected children. In September 2024, she spoke at a high-level event to commemorate the International Day to Protect Education from Attack, co-organized by Qatar, the Education Above All Foundation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNICEF. During the same month, she shared a video message for the national conference on the protection of children against recruitment and use in South Sudan. Also in September 2024, she spoke at the third national forum for human rights, held on the theme of protecting children's rights in a safe digital environment: challenges and prospects for empowerment and protection, organized by the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar. In November 2024, she spoke at a high-level conference on children's rights at a crossroads: evolving humanitarian crisis, co-organized by Belgium, UNICEF Belgium and Plan International Belgium.

49. To advocate for the protection of conflict-affected children and raise awareness, the Special Representative travelled to Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Iraq, Malta, Qatar, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United Kingdom.

50. The photo exhibition entitled “From Despair to Hope: Children Beyond Armed Conflict”, featuring the stories of conflict-affected children told through portraits taken by photojournalist Paddy Dowling, was presented in March 2024 at the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels in cooperation with Belgium and the European Commission. Between July and September 2024, the exhibition was showcased on the premises of and in cooperation with the European External Action Service.

51. The Office of the Special Representative has been consulting with partners on the development of a new advocacy campaign, scheduled to commence in 2025, aimed at rallying the international community behind the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with children’s voices at the centre. This new campaign called “Prove It Matters” was part of a pledge that the Special Representative delivered on Human Rights Day in December 2023 in the context of an OHCHR high-level event marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

52. In March 2024, following consultations with young people in Africa and in collaboration with the Special Envoy of the African Union on Youth, the Office of the Special Representative launched a social media campaign aimed at raising awareness among children and young people in Africa, in particular conflict-affected children and youth who are active on social media and digital platforms, about potential risks pertaining to the six grave violations against children and possible prevention and protection measures. The campaign included one video and five social media cards published on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and X, which reached over 14 million children and young people in conflict-affected situations in Africa. The video was also showcased in September 2024 in the General Assembly lobby.

53. Amplifying the voices of conflict-affected children continued to be central to the work of the Special Representative. In June 2024, at the Security Council open debate on children and armed conflict, the Office of the Special Representative, alongside Save the Children, facilitated the participation of a 16-year-old activist from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Stories about conflict-affected children were included in the summary of the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. During the reporting period, the Office adopted an internal policy on child safeguarding.

B. Collecting, assessing and disseminating best practices and lessons learned

54. Collecting, assessing and disseminating best practices and lessons learned, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/245, remained a key priority for the Special Representative.

55. In March 2024, based on the findings of the 2020 publication *Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict*, the Office of the Special Representative launched a training module on child-sensitive mediation developed in consultation with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and UNICEF. Two virtual training sessions were delivered to 39 participants.

56. Following the renewal of its partnership with the All Survivors Project and to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, in June 2024 the Office of the Special Representative launched a report entitled *Responding to conflict-related sexual violence against boys associated with armed groups during the process of reintegration in Colombia*, the outcome of research conducted by the All Survivors Project as an implementing partner. In October 2024, the All Survivors Project, as an implementing partner, organized a workshop in the Central African Republic to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations of two previous research studies on conflict-related sexual violence against boys in that country. In November 2024, the All Survivors Project organized a workshop in Colombia to follow up on the implementation of the

recommendations contained in the above-mentioned research study on sexual violence against boys in Colombia.

57. On 3 October 2024, the Office of the Special Representative published a joint study entitled “Child trafficking and armed conflict”, which was developed with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. It was launched on the same day during a high-level event co-organized with the Special Rapporteur, Colombia, Greece, Panama and the Philippines. The study is aimed at strengthening an understanding between conflict-related child trafficking and the six grave violations to enhance the prevention, accountability, monitoring and response for the protection of conflict-affected children by governments, regional and subregional bodies and the United Nations. It notes that while the relationship between conflict-related child trafficking and the six grave violations is frequently not examined, in practice the six grave violations are often closely linked to child trafficking as they might occur before, during or in the aftermath of child trafficking and, in some instances, such as with the recruitment and use of children, may even comprise trafficking in persons as defined by international law.

58. In 2024, the Office of the Special Representative and UNESCO developed comprehensive guidance for teachers and educators on education for children and young people affected by armed conflict, in particular those formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups. The guidance, shaped by consultations with experts and practitioners, offers practical advice on fostering inclusive and protective educational environments. It builds on resources from the education in emergencies sector and advocates the adoption of holistic teaching approaches that prioritize children’s emotional, social and academic needs. The roll-out of the guidance is planned for 2025.

59. During the reporting period, the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF, as co-chairs, organized three meetings of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism Technical Reference Group on grave violations against children in armed conflict, which brings together the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF, the Department of Peace Operations and the Department on Political and Peacebuilding Affairs to provide support and guidance to United Nations field partners on the implementation of the children and armed conflict mandate.

C. Building and supporting global partnerships

60. The Special Representative actively engaged with Member States and other key stakeholders to build and support global partnerships aimed at ending and preventing grave violations against children.

61. During bilateral meetings and events, the Special Representative encouraged Member States to ratify or accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and to endorse political commitments, including the Paris Principles, the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. During the reporting period, Mauritius and Rwanda endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. In June 2024, the Special Representative called on Member States that had not yet done so to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration during the launch of the seventh edition of the “Education under Attack” report published by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack at an event co-organized by the Global Coalition, Norway, the Republic of Korea and Slovenia. In November 2024, the Special Representative’s Europe Liaison Office participated in a workshop held in Brussels organized by Norway, the European Union and Humanity and Inclusion on the subject of how to foster a more resilient healthcare access for affected populations in Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. In addition, the Office of the Special Representative continued to participate in the Paris Principles Steering Group.

62. The Special Representative and her Office regularly exchanged information with the Groups of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, including in Brussels, Geneva, New York and Vienna, as well as in countries on the children and armed conflict agenda. In February

2024, she provided a briefing to the Group of Friends in New York and Juba. In March 2024, she met with the Geneva-based Group of Friends and, in June 2024, she met with the New York-based Group of Friends. In November 2024, she met with the Group of Friends to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna and the Group of Friends to the European Union in Brussels and, in December 2024, she met virtually with the Group of Friends in Nigeria. Her Office met regularly with the Groups of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict at the expert level, including in Brussels in February, September and October 2024, in New York and Amman in May 2024, in Geneva in August 2024 and in Vienna in October 2024.

63. The Office of the Special Representative continued to develop initiatives based on research conducted by the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers. In follow-up to consultations held in Nairobi in March 2023 with civil society organizations, consisting of or representing children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, during the reporting period her Office has been collecting lessons learned from this process, with the aim of publishing them in 2025. In April 2024, the Special Representative signed a memorandum of understanding with the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination affiliated with the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs of Princeton University as a collaboration framework for the publication of two analytic papers on gender and reintegration and on justice, accountability and reintegration, both of which are scheduled to be launched in 2025.

64. The Office of the Special Representative continued its engagement as part of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons. The Office joined in the statement of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group dedicated to combating child trafficking, issued in May 2024, to mark the World Day against Trafficking in Persons. The Office also participated in the annual principals meeting of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group in December 2024, endorsing the joint statement issued on that occasion. Her Office supported the implementation of the activities pertaining to strengthening approaches to and understanding of trafficking in persons in crisis contexts set out in the 2023–2024 workplan of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group.

65. The Office of the Special Representative pursued its collaboration with the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, including through regular participation in its advocacy working group. In January 2024, the Office formalized its membership in the Alliance.

66. In February 2024, with the support of Malta, and in cooperation with the United Nations System Staff College, the Office of the Special Representative launched a self-paced online introductory course on the children and armed conflict agenda, the Children and Armed Conflict Primer, which is freely accessible through the web page of the United Nations System Staff College.⁵ As a continuation of that project, the Office launched in November 2024 an advanced training course aimed at complementing the knowledge acquired through the Children and Armed Conflict Primer. Out of 886 applicants, 46 were selected to attend eight online sessions facilitated by over 15 speakers; the course was held from November 2024 to January 2025.

67. In February 2024, facilitated by the Special Representative's Analysis and Outreach Hub in Doha, her Office signed a memorandum of understanding with the Education Above All Foundation to provide educational opportunities for marginalized children and youth worldwide, to support Member States of the League of Arab States in endorsing and implementing the Safe Schools Declaration and to conduct awareness-raising workshops on national action plans.

⁵ See <https://www.unssc.org/courses/children-and-armed-conflict-primer>.

D. Building partnerships with regional and subregional organizations

1. African Union and regional counterparts

68. The African Union and other regional counterparts in Africa remained key partners of the Special Representative and her Office; the engagement increased during the reporting period.

69. In December 2023, in Banjul, the Special Representative delivered a briefing on children and armed conflict at a special open session of the African Union Peace and Security Council, with the participation of the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts, and of regional economic communities, regional mechanisms, African Member States and other partners.

70. In February 2024, with the support of the United Nations peace and development trust fund, the Office of the Special Representative successfully concluded a one-year project entitled “Children and armed conflict in Africa – Strengthening regional partnerships and capacities”. The project aimed to support the African Union and other regional partners in four areas: prevention, early warning, mediation, and youth engagement on joint advocacy. In the context of the project, her Office conducted a technical visit to Addis Ababa in January and February 2024 to engage with the African Union Commission and other partners on child-sensitive early warning and mediation, among other partnership priorities.

71. In September 2024, the Special Representative met with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to discuss the situation of conflict-affected children in Africa and ways to further enhance cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations on children and armed conflict. In October 2024, she briefed participants at the ninth annual informal joint seminar between members of the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council at a dedicated session on children and armed conflict, held in Tarrytown, New York.

2. European Union

72. In March 2024, the Special Representative spoke at the European Humanitarian Forum at a session organized by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and Belgium. In Brussels, she met with the Special Representative of the European Union for Human Rights and the European Union Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, as well as high-level officials from the European External Action Service. In September 2024, she met with the Vice-President for Democracy and Demography of the European Commission and the Managing Director for the Global Agenda and Multilateral Relations at the European External Action Service. In March 2024, the Special Representative provided a briefing to the Permanent Representatives of the Political and Security Committee of the Council of the European Union. In November 2024, she met with the Coordinator on children’s rights of the European Parliament and the Commissioner-designate for intergenerational fairness, youth, culture and sport.

73. The Special Representative’s Europe Liaison Office provided information on children and armed conflict to interested stakeholders and followed relevant European Union policy discussions. The Liaison Office provided a briefing on children and armed conflict to the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid of the Council of the European Union in December 2023; to members of the cabinets of several European Commissioners and of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in June 2024; to the Working Party on Human Rights of the Council of the European Union in July 2024 and to the Subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Parliament in December 2024. The Office of the Special Representative also supported the revision of the European Union Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict and the update of the Checklist for the Integration of the Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict into Common Security and Defence Policy Mission and Operations, both adopted in June 2024.

3. League of Arab States

74. The Special Representative maintained her engagement with the League of Arab States. In September 2024, she addressed the League of Arab States Committee on combating violence against children and discussed cooperation with the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the League of Arab States on the margins of the high-level segment of the General Assembly. In November 2024, she was a keynote speaker at an international conference on the role of the international community and civil society organizations in promoting and respecting the rights of the Palestinian child, organized by the social sector and family and childhood departments of the League of Arab States.

4. North Atlantic Treaty Organization

75. During the reporting period, the Special Representative's Europe Liaison Office engaged with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) counterparts on the implementation of the NATO Policy on Children and Armed Conflict. In November 2024, the Special Representative met with the NATO Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, who also covers other areas of human security, including the protection of conflict-affected children. In December 2024, the Europe Liaison Office provided an induction session on children and armed conflict to the informal group of friends of NATO Allies on Human Security.

5. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

76. In April 2024, the Special Representative spoke at a seminar on preventing and combating child trafficking in times of crisis and conflict, organized by the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict to OSCE. In November 2024, she briefed the OSCE Permanent Council and met with representatives of the OSCE secretariat. The Office of the Special Representative also provided support to the Group of Friends for the development of voluntary questions on children and armed conflict to be annexed to the questionnaire on the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security.

E. Building partnerships within the United Nations system

77. The Special Representative continued working with the Security Council and its relevant subsidiary organs. In April 2024, she briefed the Security Council, under the presidency of Malta, on addressing the consequences of the denial of humanitarian access for children. Her Office supported the organization of the annual open debate of the Security Council on children and armed conflict, held in June 2024 under the presidency of the Republic of Korea, to present the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

78. During the reporting period, the Special Representative held nine meetings with the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, including to introduce the Secretary-General's country reports on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic,⁶ Colombia,⁷ Iraq,⁸ Nigeria,⁹ the Philippines,¹⁰ and the Sudan.¹¹ Four global horizontal notes were issued to the Working Group. The Office of the Special Representative supported the organization of an induction training for incoming members of the Security Council in January 2024 and the visit of the Working Group to Colombia in December 2024.

79. The Special Representative briefed: the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2745 (2024) concerning the Central African Republic; the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the

⁶ S/2024/93.

⁷ S/2024/161.

⁸ S/2024/247.

⁹ S/2024/559.

¹⁰ S/2024/626.

¹¹ S/2024/443.

Democratic Republic of the Congo; and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

80. In October 2024, the Special Representative presented her annual report to the General Assembly.¹²

81. The Special Representative regularly exchanged information with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. She continued to serve on the Steering Committee of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and, in March 2024, she participated in a high-level meeting of the Committee, chaired by the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. In June 2024, the Special Representative spoke at a high-level event to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, organized by her Office in coordination with Argentina and the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

82. The Special Representative pursued cooperation with other United Nations entities. She met with senior officials of the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Development Coordination Office and UNICEF and their representatives in countries on the children and armed conflict agenda. In March 2024, her Office participated, in the launch of the “Practice note on practices of United Nations peacekeeping operations to prevent grave violations against children in armed conflict” of the Department of Peace Operations. In June 2024, she spoke at a workshop of United Nations peacekeeping operations child protection advisers and focal points. For the preparation of the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, she coordinated two task force meetings at the principal level comprising various United Nations partners that contribute to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations against children in armed conflict.

83. The Special Representative and her Office continued cooperating with United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies in Geneva. In March 2024, the Special Representative met with the Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and, in June 2024, on the occasion of the World Day against Child Labour, she shared a video message within the framework of the twenty-fifth anniversary of ILO Convention 182 (1999) concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

84. Implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed in September 2022 between the Special Representative and UNESCO continued, including regarding the development of the above-mentioned guidance for teachers and educators. In September 2024, the Special Representative met with the UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education to discuss ongoing efforts and, in September and October 2024, she engaged with the Head of the UNESCO office for the Gulf States and Yemen, based in Doha.

85. In January 2024, the Special Representative met with the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. The Office of the Special Representative contributed to the report on the impacts of terrorism and counterterrorism on children. In July 2024, she met with the Director of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and with the Director of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Center.

86. In March 2024, the Special Representative spoke at an online briefing on education in emergencies organized by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and in April 2024, she shared a video statement for the opening ceremony of the 2024 Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Weeks organized by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Switzerland.

87. As a member of the United Nations task force on the global study on children deprived of liberty, the Special Representative supported the follow-up to the recommendations contained in the study, including by joining in two thematic task force advocacy briefs. The Office of the Special Representative provided inputs for the pan-African report entitled *Deprived of Liberty, Denied Justice: Double Jeopardy for Children in Conflict Situations in*

¹² [A/79/245](#).

Africa, drafted by the African Child Policy Forum. The Special Representative also participated virtually in the launch of the report in June 2024. In December 2024, she shared a video statement for the Global Conference on Justice for Children Deprived of Liberty organized by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNICEF, Defence for Children International and the non-governmental organizations' Panel on Children Deprived of Liberty.

88. During the reporting period, the Office of the Special Representative closely followed system-wide processes, including the negotiations on “The Pact for the Future” and discussions on a treaty on crimes against humanity to advocate for the inclusion of language on children and armed conflict. Her Office also provided input to the thematic consultation on security sector reform and governance for the meeting of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture and to the ongoing review of the United Nations human rights due diligence policy framework.

89. The Special Representative and her Office continued participating in the system-wide working group on sexual exploitation and abuse. In May 2024, the Special Representative took part in the meeting and retreat of the United Nations high-level steering group on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.

90. In December 2023, her Office attended the launch of the revised policy on children issued by the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, for which it had provided input.

F. Building partnerships with civil society, academia and training institutes

91. Partnerships with civil society, academia and training institutes continued to be a priority for the Special Representative. She remained engaged with New York-based and Europe-based non-governmental organizations, her engagement with the latter being facilitated through her Europe Liaison Office, and she continued to liaise with civil society partners during her field visits. The Special Representative and her Office participated in dozens of civil society events.

92. In March 2024, the Office of the Special Representative, together with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the republic and canton of Geneva, Defence for Children International, Save the Children, Child Rights Connect, Child Rights International Network and the Rafto Foundation for Human Rights organized a side event in Geneva on strengthening international accountability regarding violence against children in armed conflict. In July 2024, the Special Representative provided a briefing at the interregional conversation on the protection of children against major violations in armed conflicts in Central Africa and the Liptako Gourma region, organized by civil society organizations from Central Africa. In October 2024, she shared a video message for a side event on the impacts of armed conflict on children: preventing and addressing violations of international humanitarian law against children and responding to children's needs, co-organized on the margins of the thirty-fourth International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent by Save the Children, Watchlist, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and six States Members of the United Nations. The same month she held a joint meeting in London with representatives of Save the Children, War Child, Crisis Action and Amnesty International. The Special Representative also continued to support the work of the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.

93. The Special Representative and her Office continued to collaborate with the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict. This included delivering opening remarks and a training session as part of its advanced training course on international criminal jurisdiction and children in armed conflict in June 2024. In July and in November 2024, the Office also provided training sessions on the children and armed conflict mandate and child-sensitive mediation as part of the Universities Network's advanced course on mediation in international conflicts. In October 2024, on the margins of the annual open debate of the

Security Council on women, peace and security, the Special Representative spoke at a side-event on “Enhancing the international protection of children, particularly girls, affected by armed conflict”, organized by the Universities Network and Italy.

94. In October 2024, the Office of the Special Representative, through its Analysis and Outreach Hub in Doha, organized a workshop on children and armed conflict for students from Georgetown University, Northwestern University and Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

95. In September 2024, the Special Representative’s Europe Liaison Office delivered a module on children and armed conflict as part of the Belgian Generic Training in Civilian Crisis Management organized by the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations. In November 2024, a dedicated training on children and armed conflict was provided by the Liaison Office for Belgians deployed to European Union crisis management missions.

V. Recommendations

96. The Special Representative remains deeply concerned by the scale and severity of grave violations committed against children in armed conflict. She calls upon all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and other relevant international legal frameworks and to immediately end and prevent grave violations, including by taking all necessary measures to protect children during military operations, in line with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.

97. The Special Representative reminds all Member States that they should respect and ensure the rights of children, independently from their parents or guardians, and that children are entitled to special protection under international human rights law, particularly under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She calls on Member States to recognize all persons under 18 years of age as children and calls upon the international community to increase its advocacy in that regard.

98. The Special Representative calls upon Member States that have not yet done so to accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and to adopt national legislations and policies to prohibit and criminalize the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations by armed forces and groups. She calls upon Member States to endorse political instruments improving the protection of conflict-affected children, including the Paris Principles, the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

99. The Special Representative recalls the importance of the guidance note of the Secretary-General on child rights mainstreaming adopted in 2023 and encourages United Nations entities, within their respective mandates, to ensure the strengthening of a child rights-based approach in the work of the United Nations, including in conflict settings.

100. The Special Representative calls upon parties to armed conflict to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children, as well as access by children to services, assistance and protection, and to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets.

101. The Special Representative calls upon parties to armed conflict to enable unimpeded access to education for conflict-affected children. She expresses concern about attacks against schools and their military use and stresses that it is fundamental to preserve their civilian character. She urges Member States to do their utmost to protect schools, students and teachers, as well as hospitals, healthcare institutions and health workers, and reminds all parties to the conflict that the military use of schools or health facilities must be avoided.. She further calls for the adoption and implementation of dedicated measures to ensure the continuous education of girls.

102. The Special Representative calls upon Member States to ensure that birth registration is accessible to all without discrimination of any kind, including on the basis of the child's or the child's parents' immigration status, gender, disability, ethnicity, race, social origin or other diversity factors, and to remove legal and practical barriers to birth registration, including by raising awareness of the associated rights and benefits. She further calls on Member States to ensure continuity of birth registration during and after situations of conflict and humanitarian crisis, including through the deployment of mobile registration teams, and calls upon Governments to continue engaging with the United Nations on solutions for the issuance of civil documentation for children.

103. The Special Representative encourages the Human Rights Council to maintain the practice of including recommendations on the protection of children affected by armed conflict when adopting resolutions on country-specific situations or thematic issues and in the universal periodic review process, with particular attention to the implementation of such recommendations. The Special Representative also encourages the Council to continue including references to child rights violations and conflict-affected children in its resolutions establishing or renewing the mandates of special procedures, commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and investigations and to ensure that those resolutions provide for dedicated expertise on child rights.

104. The Special Representative welcomes the continued attention paid to the impact of armed conflict on children in reports of States to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Committee. She urges relevant Member States to include, as appropriate, specific references to information on grave violations against children, gaps in their applicable legal and policy frameworks and accountability initiatives in their submissions to those bodies.

105. The Special Representative recalls the importance of allocating sufficient resources to her Office to ensure the implementation of her mandate, including the continuation of her cooperation with Geneva-based actors, such as United Nations human rights mechanisms, United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, Member States, academia and civil society, as well as to respond to capacity-building needs on children and armed conflict among Member States, United Nations entities, regional and subregional organizations and other child protection actors, including in situations of transition and in new situations of concern.
