

Review of the 2014 March Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict

On 7 March 2014, the UN Security Council held an extraordinary [Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict](#) under the Luxembourg Presidency. This is one of two debates on Children and Armed Conflict to be held in 2014. A second Open Debate will occur following the publication of the Secretary-General's 13th Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict.

Four United Nations officials, including the Secretary-General, and a former Sierra Leonean child soldier briefed the Council, after which **61 delegations, representing 82 countries**, participated in the debate.

During the debate, [SCR Resolution 2143 \(2014\)](#) was adopted unanimously by the Security Council, and further endorsed by 34 non-Council Member States.¹ The adopted resolution has an omnibus approach, but the most prominent issue is advanced language **on attacks on schools and the military use of schools**. Resolution 2143 encourages the development of measures to deter the use of schools by armed groups and forces. Other successes of the resolution include a call for **enhanced preparedness of the security sector**. The resolution emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming child protection issues in security sector reform, including by developing age assessment mechanisms to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers. It also calls for child protection pre-deployment training for UN peacekeepers.

Accountability and ending impunity also enjoy a strong backing in the resolution. The resolution acknowledges the important contribution of the International Criminal Court to ending impunity for grave violations against children; and encourages vetting mechanisms to ensure perpetrators of grave violations against children are not included in a country's army or other security forces.

Finally, the resolution urges the need to **incorporate child protection provisions in peace negotiations** and peace agreements.

The debate was generally positive and manifested broad support for strengthening implementation of the Children and Armed Conflict (CAC) agenda. Participants expressed support, in particular, for the joint campaign of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC), and UNICEF, to end recruitment and use of children by Government security forces, ["Children not Soldiers"](#). Support was also expressed for the following: ending attacks on schools and military use of schools; pre-deployment training for UN peacekeepers; enforcement of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy in relation to violations against children; and mainstreaming child protection issues into security sector reform, including through military training and standard operating procedures at the national level, and age verification through birth registration.

Seven States (Colombia, Myanmar, Philippines, Russia, Sudan, Syria, and Thailand) made statements that affirmed their commitment to protect children in armed conflict but criticized specific elements of the agenda, such as the

¹ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey.

inclusion of “situations of concern” in the Secretary-General’s annual report, a lack of criteria for listing and delisting purposes, and an alleged lack of accuracy of information on grave violations included in the Secretary-General’s annual reports.

On March 6, a day prior to the Open Debate, SRSZ Zerrougui and UNICEF launched their joint campaign, [“Children not Soldiers”](#), to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers by government forces by 2016. Eight governments are listed in the Secretary-General’s 12th Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict for the recruitment and use of children. Meanwhile, 44 non-State armed groups are also listed for recruitment and use of child soldiers. Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict regrets that SCR 2143 did not mention the need to conduct a humanitarian dialogue with non-State armed groups for the purpose of adopting action plans.

In sum, the March Open Debate reflected the current positive consensus on the CAC agenda. Small gains were achieved in the normative framework, but there is room for more improvement. The favorable composition of the Security Council offers a real opportunity to further advance rights of children affected by armed conflict.

The attached analytical summary and overview of country statements provide further detail on the issues raised during the Open Debate including the extent to which they were raised and by whom. It is hoped that this information may be useful in helping to shape targeted follow-up to the Security Council’s March 2014 Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict.

Analytical Summary of the March 2014 Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict

Debate Format

- UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, addressed the UN Security Council, and 2 UN officials (SRSG-CAAC, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF), and Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, a former child soldier from Sierra Leone, briefed the Council.
- 61 delegations² participated, including the European Union and the Human Security Network, representing 82 countries.
- 15 Council Members unanimously adopted UNSCR 2143, which was cosponsored by 12 Security Council Members³ and 35 non-Security Council Members.⁴
- 21 new Member States participated in the Open Debate⁵ (4 as current Security Council Members and 17 non-Security Council Members)⁶.

Overall Tone: Positive and Constructive

- 54 of 61 overall participants made generally favorable remarks;
 - o 7 States⁷ were critical of some aspects of the agenda but were still favorable overall.
- Factors contributing to a positive tone include:
 - o A Council membership more favorable to the issue⁸;
 - o Efforts toward consensus- building and confidence-building by SCWG Chair and SRSG-CAAC;

² Argentina, Australia, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, United Kingdom, USA, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Estonia, Greece, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden on behalf of the Nordic countries, Switzerland, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Uruguay, European Union, Greece on behalf of the Human Security Network

³ Argentina, Australia, Chad, Chile, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom, and USA

⁴ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey.

⁵ Armenia, Austria, Chad, Botswana, Croatia, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Jordan, Lithuania, Montenegro, Myanmar, Netherlands, Qatar, Rwanda, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Turkey and Uganda

⁶ “New” participants are defined as Member States who participated in an Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict for the first time in the past five years(2009), excluding Member States who addressed the Council in 2013 during the June Public Debate on Children and Armed Conflict.

⁷ Colombia, Myanmar, Philippines, Russia, Sudan, Syria, and Thailand

⁸ Notably, replacement of Pakistan and Azerbaijan, with Jordan and Lithuania

- Priority for less controversial topics, such as e.g. the omission of references to humanitarian dialogue with non-State armed actors.

Prominent Themes in Country Statements:

Attacks on Schools and Military Use of Schools

- 34 delegations addressed the importance of ending the military use of schools⁹;
 - 10 states welcomed the drafting of guidelines to prevent military use¹⁰.
- 35 States condemned attacks on schools¹¹.

Security Sector Preparedness

- 17 delegations commended the role of child protection advisers in UN peacekeeping missions¹²;
- 19 delegations called for pre-deployment training in child protection for UN peacekeepers¹³;
- 1 State (Switzerland) mentioned the need for a UN Peacekeeping policy banning listed countries from contributing troops to peacekeeping mission until action plans have been signed and implemented;
- 3 delegations (Argentina, EU and Turkey) encouraged integrating child protection issues into military guidelines;
- 3 delegations (Austria, Canada and Portugal) highlighted the importance of UN human rights vetting procedures for military troops such as the UN Human Rights Due Diligence policy.

Action Plan Implementation

- 25 delegations expressed support for action plan implementation¹⁴;
- 3 States (Thailand, Myanmar and Russia) criticized the lack of criteria for listing and delisting of States in the Secretary General's Annual Reports on Children and Armed Conflict;
- 44 delegations welcomed the "Children, not Soldiers" campaign of the SRSB-CAAC and UNICEF¹⁵;
- Specific suggestions for strengthening action plan implementation included:
 - 16 delegations encouraged reaching out to non-State actors for action plan implementation¹⁶;

⁹ Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Estonia, EU, France, Greece, Greece*, Guatemala, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Rwanda, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden*, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA

¹⁰ Austria, Chile, France, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Japan, New Zealand, Slovenia, Sweden, Qatar

¹¹ Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chad, Chile, EU, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Rwanda, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden*, Syria, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay

¹² Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Croatia, Estonia, EU, Germany, Guatemala, Indonesia, Jordan, Korea, Lithuania Portugal, Rwanda, Slovakia, United Kingdom, USA

¹³ Argentina, Austria, Canada, Croatia, Estonia, EU, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Pakistan, Portugal, Rwanda, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, USA

¹⁴ Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Greece*, Honduras, Jordan, Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Rwanda, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom, USA, Sweden*, Switzerland

¹⁵ Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Chad, Chile, China, Croatia, Estonia, EU, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, France, Honduras, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden*, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA

¹⁶ Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Korea, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Slovenia, Switzerland

- 7 delegations emphasized the need for unconditional access of the UN to non-State actors for the conclusion and implementation of action plans¹⁷;
- 4 delegations called on donors to support action plan implementation¹⁸;
- 1 delegation (the European Union) emphasized the need for the issue of children and armed conflict to be addressed in peace negotiations.

Accountability and Impunity

- 23 delegations called on the Council to address the problem of persistent perpetrators¹⁹;
- 16 delegations supported targeted measures against perpetrators of grave violations²⁰;
- 21 delegations encouraged strengthening national capacities, including through:
 - donor support to national capacities for child protection²¹;
 - universal birth registration²²;
 - strengthening investigative and prosecutorial capacities²³;
 - age verification in military recruitment²⁴.
- 24 delegations recognized the role of the International Criminal Court in ending impunity for violations against children²⁵.
- 2 States (Myanmar and Russia) criticized the definition of persistent perpetrators;

Missing Elements:

Security Council Working Group Children and Armed Conflict Working Methods

- None of the participants raised the need to address the continuing problem of lengthy delays in adopting country-specific conclusions;
- Only 4 speakers (Austria, Slovenia, Montenegro and EU) spoke in favor of enforcing the SCWG-CAAC tools;
- New Zealand called for open sessions of the SCWG-CAAC.

*Sweden spoke on behalf of the Nordic Countries, including Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway.

*Greece spoke on behalf of the Human Security Network, which is composed of Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Panama, Slovenia, Switzerland and Thailand. South Africa is an observer.

¹⁷ Australia, Austria, EU, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Slovenia, Sweden

¹⁸ Greece, Honduras, Rwanda, USA

¹⁹ Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Canada, Chile, Greece, Greece*, Guatemala, Japan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, New Zealand, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Rwanda, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden*, Turkey, United Kingdom, USA

²⁰ Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Chile, Croatia, Estonia, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mexico, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Turkey

²¹ Botswana, Canada, China, Estonia, Greece, Guatemala, Mexico, Jordan, Rwanda

²² Argentina, Canada, Chile, France, Greece*, Guatemala, Rwanda, Slovenia, Turkey, USA

²³ Botswana, Estonia, France, Greece*, Guatemala, Lithuania, Korea, Mexico, Pakistan, Rwanda, Turkey

²⁴ Botswana, Canada, Greece*, Guatemala, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Slovakia, Turkey

²⁵ Luxembourg, Argentina, USA, Lithuania, France, Australia, Korea, UK, Jordan, Chile, EU, Liechtenstein, Sweden*, Belgium, Italy, Estonia, Brazil, Uruguay, Netherlands, Croatia, Montenegro, Botswana, Portugal, Guatemala

Speaker:	Support for the campaign – “Children not Soldiers”	Welcome and encourage action plan implementation	Donors to support action plans	Reach out to armed groups for action plan implementation	Unconditional access for UN to armed groups	Address persistent perpetrators	Implement targeted measures or sanctions	Donor support for national capacities for child protection	Strengthen investigative and prosecutorial capacities	Birth registration	Age verification for military recruitment	Condemn attacks on schools	Military use of schools	Lucens Guidelines	Integrate child protection issues into military guidelines	Pre-deployment training for UN peacekeepers	Child protection advisors in UN missions	Recognition of the ICC and its role in ending impunity	Role of regional organizations
Belgium		P		P								P	P					P	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	P					P	P					P							P
Botswana	P					P	P	P	P		P							P	
Brazil																	P	P	
Canada		P		P		P		P		P	P	P	P			P			
Colombia																			
Croatia	P						P						P			P	P	P	
DRC																			
Estonia	P	P		P			P	P	P				P			P	P	P	P
Germany	P	P		P								P					P		
Greece*	P	P				P			P	P	P		P						
Greece		P	P	P		P		P				P	P						
Guatemala	P					P		P	P	P	P		P				P	P	
Honduras	P	P	P	P															P
India																			
Indonesia																P	P		P
Italy	P											P	P			P		P	
Japan	P					P	P					P	P	P		P			
Lichtenstein	P			P	P	P	P					P	P	P				P	
Malaysia	P															P			
Mexico	P	P					P	P	P		P	P				P			
Montenegro	P	P			P							P	P			P		P	P
Morocco	P	P										P							

Speaker:	Support for the campaign – “Children not Soldiers”	Welcome and encourage action plan implementation	Donors to support action plans	Reach out to armed groups for action plan implementation	Unconditional access for UN to armed groups	Address persistent perpetrators	Implement targeted measures or sanctions	Donor support for national capacities for child protection	Strengthen investigative and prosecutorial capacities	Birth registration	Age verification for military recruitment	Condemn attacks on schools	Military use of schools	Lucens Guidelines	Integrate child protection issues into military guidelines	Pre-deployment training for UN peacekeepers	Child protection advisors in UN missions	Recognition of the ICC and its role in ending impunity	Role of regional organizations
Myanmar	P																		
Netherlands	P	P									P	P	P					P	
New Zealand	P			P		P						P	P	P					
Pakistan	P					P			P		P	P	P			P			P
Philippines																			
Portugal	P					P	P					P	P			P	P	P	
Qatar						P	P					P	P	P					
Slovakia	P										P	P	P				P		
Slovenia	P	P		P	P	P	P			P		P	P	P					
Spain	P	P				P						P	P						
Sri Lanka	P																		
Sudan	P																		
Sweden*	P	P			P	P						P	P	P				P	P
Switzerland	P	P		P												P			
Syria												P							
Thailand	P															P			
Turkey	P					P	P		P	P	P	P	P		P	P			P
Uganda																			P
Uruguay	P											P	P					P	
European Union	P				P							P	P		P	P	P	P	P
Total mentioning	44	25	4	16	7	23	16	9	11	10	9	35	34	10	3	19	17	24	16