



EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:30AM NEW YORK TIME (EST) JUNE 14, 2010

Contact: Eva Smets (New York)
+1 212-551-2743 or +1 646-943-3798 (mobile)
email: evas@watchlist.org

New Report Calls on World Leaders to Protect Afghanistan's Children

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict calls upon the Afghan government and its international supporters to prioritize children's needs

June 14, 2010- New York Launched today in New York and in Kabul, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict's newest report provides the most up-to-date account of the dire situation facing the children in Afghanistan. In order to achieve peace, the Afghan government, the UN Security Council and the humanitarian community must prioritize child protection, and end impunity for violators of children's rights.

"I know many families in Afghanistan who are afraid to even let their children leave home. They are so often the innocent victims of suicide bombings or other attacks that it is not safe for them to get the education or health services that all children should have," said Save the Children Afghanistan Deputy Country Director Fazel Jalil who was present at the launch today. "Children are really suffering in Afghanistan and the government and its partners must take responsibility and protect them."

Leading up to the UN Security Council's Annual Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, the 70-page report, *Setting the Right Priorities: Protecting Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Afghanistan*, highlights the impact of limited humanitarian access and the failure of national and international decision makers to consider children's needs. According to the report, children in Afghanistan bear the brunt of the war. In 2009, more than 1000 children were killed by aerial strikes, night raids, suicide bombings, landmines and other explosives. In the same year, the UN in Afghanistan recorded the highest number of attacks against education in the world, primarily targeting schools, students (especially girls) and teachers.

The report also documents the killing and maiming of children, forced displacement, attacks on schools, rape and sexual violence, recruitment and use of child soldiers, landmines and explosives and other violations.

"Putting children's needs at the forefront and bringing those who commit violations against children to justice must be central to conflict resolution strategies in Afghanistan," said Eva Smets, the Director of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. "The success of efforts to

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:30AM NEW YORK TIME (EST) JUNE 14, 2010

bring peace to Afghanistan lies in our ability to protect the children of the country – we must set the right priorities!”

Embargoed copies of the full report in English and a summary in English, Dari and Pashto are available upon request.

###

The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts and to guarantee their rights. As a global network, the Watchlist builds partnerships among local, national and international non-governmental organizations, enhancing mutual capacities and strengths. Working together, we strategically collect and disseminate information on violations against children in conflicts in order to influence key decision-makers to create and implement programs and policies that effectively protect children.

For more information, please visit our website at www.watchlist.org.