2013 Security Council Public Debate on Children and Armed Conflict:

Review, Analysis and Lessons Learned

On 17 June 2013, the Security Council held its annual debate on children and armed conflict (S/PV.6980). Three United Nations officials and one NGO representative briefed the Council, after which all 15 Council members and 11 non-Council delegations participated in the debate.

Due to the Council's full schedule, the debate followed a "public" rather than "open" format. This limited participation of non-Council members in the debate, and it gave a disproportionate role in the debate to those states mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

The debate was generally positive and manifested broad support within the Council for strengthening implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda. Participants expressed support in particular for justice and accountability, action plan conclusion and implementation, sanctions, engaging non-state armed groups, mainstreaming children and armed conflict in UN missions and peace processes, and rehabilitation or reintegration of former child soldiers. These aspects of implementation were all reflected positively in a Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2013/8) which was adopted by consensus, a positive development following the divided vote in 2012 over resolution 2068.

While action plans were referred to as the "cornerstone" of the agenda, several delegations emphasized that they should be used alongside a range of complementary tools in a comprehensive approach to prevent and end violations. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC) announced a new campaign to end the recruitment and use of children by all State armed forces by 2016 which was welcomed. However, few details were provided on this campaign. Many delegations called on the SRSG-CAAC and the UN to enhance efforts to engage non-state actors.

Concern was expressed during the debate and in the Presidential Statement about the need to address in particular persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children. The Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict called for the Secretary-General to issue a report specifically addressing perpetrators and how to hold them accountable.

Concern was also expressed regarding emerging challenges of child protection such as the military use of schools, the use of children as suicide bombers and drones. Current situations attracting significant attention included Syria, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central African Republic.

Two principal lessons can be drawn from the 2013 debate for the future. First, to restore the important role of the debate in signaling and attracting support for the UN's children and armed conflict agenda, future debates should return to the open format. Second, there is a need for a clear vision and strategy setting out how the different complementary tools can best be used to prevent and to end violations. The announcement of the SRSG-CAC's campaign to end recruitment and use by State armed forces by 2016 is a welcome development. More details should be provided on this campaign, and similar initiatives should be developed with respect to non-state armed groups.

The attached analytical summary provides further details on participation in and the content of the debate.

Analytical Summary of the 2013 Security Council Public Debate on Children and Armed Conflict

* Due to the limitation of participation in the debate to Council Members and Member States "specially affected" (e.g., mentioned in the Secretary-General's annual report), this summary is restricted to statements of Council members unless otherwise noted.

Debate Format and Limited Participation

- 3 UN officials (SRSG-CAAC, USG DPKO, and Deputy Executive Director UNICEF) and 1 NGO representative (Save the Children) briefed the Council: same numbers as 2012
- Due to the public (not open) nature of the debate, only 11 non-Council members participated, a 66% decrease from the 31 participating in 2012
- 9 of the 11 non-Council members were mentioned in the Secretary-General's report in connection with violations occurring on their territories

Overall Tone: Positive and Constructive

- 13 Council members and 20 of 26 (77%) overall participants generally favourable in remarks
    - In comparison: in 2012, only 9 Council members and 74% (35 of 47) of all participants offered favourable statements.
- Factors contributing to the increased positive tone include:
    - attainment of consensus on the Presidential Statement in contrast to the divided vote on resolution 2068 in 2012,
    - changes in Council membership,[1]
    - adoption of a more positive and constructive approach by previously critical Council members and non-Council members,[2]
    - non-participation of previously critical delegations,[3] and positive statements by delegations not participating in 2012.[4]

Overall Theme: Strengthening Implementation of the Agenda

- 13 Council members made strengthening implementation of the CAAC agenda the main theme of their remarks.[5] Specific issues raised are summarized below.

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[1] Notably, replacement of Colombia and India, both mentioned in the Secretary-General's annual report, with Argentina and Republic of Korea.
[2] In particular, Pakistan and Azerbaijan among Council members and Iraq and India among non-Council members.
[3] Brazil, Philippines, Sudan.
[4] Chad, Central African Republic.

Justice and Accountability

- 14 Council members emphasized justice and accountability, both as ends in themselves and as tools for preventing violations[6]
    - 8 emphasized the role of national justice, including support for domestic criminalization of violations[7]
    - 11 supported international justice mechanisms[8]

Action Plan Conclusion and Implementation

- 11 Council members expressed support for action plan implementation and conclusion[9]

- Specific suggestions for strengthening action plan implementation included:
    - 8 Council members called for further support/resources for implementation[10]
    - 2 non-Council members encouraged diplomacy in country/groups of friends[11]
    - Group of Friends called for greater transparency of action plan commitments
    - 1 non-Council member encouraged Security Council Working Group field trips[12]

Sanctions

- 6 Council members expressed support for using sanctions to end violations[13]
    - 4 called for strengthening use of existing sanctions regimes[14]
    - 2 recommended either expanding the mandate of the Working Group to impose thematic sanctions or instituting a new sanctions regimes[15]

- 1 Council member expressed skepticism at the use of sanctions[16]

Engaging Non-State Armed Groups

- 6 Council members called on the SRSG-CAC or the UN generally to engage non-state armed groups[17]

Mainstreaming

- 8 Council members called for better mainstreaming of children and armed conflict:

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[5] All Council members except Russian Federation and China.
[6] All Council members except China. India, DRC, Canada and the EU also raised.
[7] Argentina, Australia, Guatemala, Togo, Republic of Korea, Morocco, Rwanda, Pakistan.
[8] Luxembourg, United States, Azerbaijan, Argentina, Australia, France, Guatemala, Togo, Republic of Korea, Pakistan, United Kingdom.
[9] Luxembourg, United States, Azerbaijan, Australia, France, Guatemala, Togo, Republic of Korea, Morocco, Rwanda, United Kingdom. Canada and the EU also raised.
[10] Luxembourg, Argentina, Australia, France, Togo, Rwanda, Pakistan, United Kingdom.
[11] Canada and the EU
[12] EU
[13] Luxembourg, Argentina, Australia, France, Guatemala, Republic of Korea. Canada and the EU also raised.
[14] Argentina, Australia, Guatemala, Republic of Korea.
[15] France, Guatemala.
[16] China.
[17] Luxembourg, United States, Australia, France, Republic of Korea, Morocco. Canada and the EU also raised.

- o 6 called for mainstreaming in UN missions[18]
- o 2 called for mainstreaming in peace processes[19]

DDRRR

- 5 Council members drew attention to the rehabilitation or reintegration of former child soldiers[20]

Security Council Working Group Working Methods

- Zero participants raised the need to address growing inefficiencies in the Working Group

- Only one non-Council speaker (European Union) called for greater use of the Working Group's Toolkit.

Evolving Nature of Armed Conflict and Emerging Challenges for Child Protection

- Of the emerging challenges highlighted in the SG's annual report:
  - o 7 Council members expressed concern at the military use of schools, [21]
  - o 4 expressed concern at the use of drones[22]
  - o 3 expressed concern at the use of children as suicide bombers[23]
  - o 2 addressed the issue of detention of children.[24]

Country-specific situations

Delegations highlighted concerns regarding specific country situations, primarily Syria[25] but also Mali,[26] the Democratic Republic of the Congo,[27] and Central African Republic.[28]

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[18] Guatemala, United Kingdom. India as a Troop Contributing Country and DRC as the site of a large peacekeeping mission also raised.

[19] United States, Argentina, France, Togo, Republic of Korea, Rwanda. Canada and the EU also raised.

[20] Argentina, France, Morocco, China, United Kingdom. India also raised.

[21] Azerbaijan, Argentina, Australia, Guatemala, Togo, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom. EU, DRC and CAR also raised.

[22] Argentina, Russian Federation, Guatemala, Pakistan. DRC also raised.

[23] Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Togo.

[24] Argentina, Republic of Korea. EU also raised.

[25] 7 Council members: Luxembourg, United States, Australia, France, Guatemala, Republic of Korea, Rwanda. Syria and the EU also raised.

[26] 3 Council members: Australia, France, Rwanda. Chad and the EU also raised.

[27] 4 Council members: United States, Australia, France, Rwanda. DRC also raised.

[28] 3 Council members: Australia, France, Rwanda. EU and CAR also raised.