



Review of the 2015 March Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict

On 25 March 2015, the UN Security Council (UNSC) held an Open Debate on children armed conflict under the Presidency of France on children as victims of non-State armed actors (ANSAs). The open debate did not result in an outcome document, but is followed by a non-Paper summarizing actions proposed by Member States on how to prevent and respond to violations committed by armed groups against children. For a second year in a row, this was the first of two thematic debates on children and armed conflict. The second open debate is anticipated to take place in June, following the publication of the 14th Annual Report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict.

At the open debate, **75 delegations intervened, representing 183 countries**. The tone of the debate was constructive, with Member States delivering tangible suggestions for engagement with non-State armed actors. The most prominent themes addressed were (1) requesting the Secretary-General to include in the annexes to his reports on children and armed conflict (CAAC) those parties to armed conflict that engage in abductions of children, (2) attacks against schools and the military use of schools, (3) a call on governments to facilitate engagement of ANSA, and (4) the need to include CAAC concerns in peace processes.

First, **21 delegations endorsed expanding the gateway to the annexes of the SG's annual report to include the grave violation of abductions**, signaling broad support for a normative expansion of the CAAC agenda.

Twenty-four delegations expressed deep concern over attacks on schools, and 16 particularly spoke out against the military use of schools. Member States also cited specific measures that may be adopted to prevent attacks against education. **Seventeen delegations called for governments to facilitate the engagement of ANSAs by the relevant UN offices** for the purposes of developing action plans and other protective measures. Six Member States made negative remarks concerning UN access to ANSAs for the purpose of humanitarian dialogue.

Fifteen delegations called for the inclusion of CAAC concerns in peace processes, four of which specifically called on the UN to develop guidance for mediators for addressing conflict-related violations perpetrated against children, and two for encouraging third party negotiators to mobilize ANSAs in support of action plan adoption and implementation. Similarly, **sixteen delegations invoked the need for inclusion of CAAC in UN-mandated peace and political missions**, validating the crucial role of the UN and regional peace operations in child protection.

Lastly at this open debate, looking at the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for tools to engage ANSAs, **five delegations called for increase in the range and frequency of the tools from its toolkit**, while **14 delegations in particular spoke of sanctions as an effective tool for promoting accountability among ANSAs** for grave violations against children.

Watchlist's analytical summary of the debate provides more detail regarding specific themes featured in the debate, as well as an overview of the statements by participating delegations that pertain to Watchlist's [key recommendations to the UNSC](#).



Analytical Summary of the March 2015 Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict

Debate Format

- 3 UN officials (Secretary-General, SRSG-CAAC, and Deputy Executive Director UNICEF), and 2 civil society organizations (Save the Children-CAR and Paix pour l'enfance-DRC) briefed the Council.
- 75 delegations¹ participated, including the African Union, European Union, ASEAN, Human Security Network and NATO, representing 183 countries.
- 23 new States or intergovernmental bodies participated (2 council members² and 21 others³).

Overall Tone: Constructive

- 69 of 75 overall participants made generally favorable remarks;
 - o 6 delegations were critical of some aspects of the agenda, namely Colombia, India, Myanmar, Sudan, Thailand, and Turkey.
- Factors contributing to a positive tone include:
 - o Consensus over the importance of addressing non-State armed actors as being the majority of perpetrators of the grave violations being committed against children;
 - o Debate's primary focus on concrete proposals on how to prevent and respond to violations committed by armed groups against children, on the basis of existing or new tools, rather than on institutional aspects and past resolutions, or progress realized to date on the CAAC agenda.

Prominent Themes in Country Statements:

Requesting the Secretary-General to include in the annexes to his CAAC reports those parties to armed conflict that engage in abductions of children

- 21 delegations⁴ urged the Council to expand the "triggers" for listing parties to a conflict to include abductions.

¹ Angola, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russia, Spain, UK, USA, Venezuela, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria (Human Security Network), Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, DRC, Estonia, Egypt, Gabon, Germany, Guatemala, Holy See, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mali, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden (Nordic Countries), Switzerland, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, Vietnam (ASEAN), AU, EU, NATO.

² Angola, Venezuela.

³ Afghanistan, Benin, Burundi, Cambodia, Croatia, Egypt, Gabon, Holy See, Hungary, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mali, Netherlands, Palestine, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, AU, ASEAN, NATO.

⁴ France, Malaysia, Angola, Lithuania, Chad, UK, Spain, EU, Estonia, Austria, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Canada, Liechtenstein, Croatia, Portugal, Japan, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Ukraine.

Promoting safe schools and ending military use of schools

- 24 delegations⁵ expressing concern over attacks and threats of attacks against schools, calling on parties to conflict to cease such attacks.
- 16 delegations⁶ expressed concerns over military use of schools in their statements.
 - 10 delegations⁷ particularly mentioned *Draft Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict* in their statements, with respect to deterring military use of schools in armed conflict.
 - 2 delegations⁸ called for adoption of concrete measures to deter military use of schools during armed conflict.

Facilitating the opportunity for ANSAs to sign and implement action plans and/or other protective measures

- 17 delegations⁹ called for the governments to facilitate engagement of ANSAs by the SRSG-CAAC and relevant agencies for the purposes of developing action plans and other protective measures for ending grave violations.
 - 6 Member States¹⁰ made negative mentions on the matter of Member States granting access to ANSAs.
 - 4 delegations¹¹ made particular mentions of other actors who can assist with the promotion of action plan adoption and implementation by ANSAs, such as through turning to civil society actors who have the ability to access some ANSAs and could, due to their neutrality, facilitate negotiation of action plans.
- 7 Member States¹² called for the UN to develop strategies for reaching out to ANSAs to promote action plan adoption and implementation.
- 4 Member States¹³ specifically called for ensuring that ANSAs be made aware of the listing process.

Considering CAAC in the peacemaking process

- 15 delegations¹⁴ called for inclusion of CAAC in peace processes.
 - 4 delegations¹⁵ called for developing UN guidance for mediators on addressing conflict-related violations perpetrated against children in ceasefire and peace agreements.
 - 2 delegations¹⁶ called for encouraging third party negotiators to mobilize ANSAs in support of action plan adoption and implementation.

⁵ Chile, France, New Zealand, Nigeria, EU, Algeria, Afghanistan, Burundi, Canada, Croatia, Estonia, Guatemala, Hungary, Luxembourg, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Morocco, Nordic Countries, Human Security Network.

⁶ Nigeria, Chile, Nordic Countries, EU, Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia, Canada, Human Security Network, Philippines, Burundi, Algeria, Qatar, Portugal, South Africa, Montenegro.

⁷ Chad, Chile, Croatia, Guatemala, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Human Security Network, Portugal, Nordic Countries, EU.

⁸ Guatemala, Qatar.

⁹ Chad, France, Lithuania, Jordan, Spain, Australia, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Slovenia, Switzerland, EU, Human Security Network.

¹⁰ Colombia, India, Myanmar, Sudan, Thailand, Turkey.

¹¹ Chad, Kazakhstan, Switzerland, Liechtenstein.

¹² New Zealand, Australia, Croatia, Estonia, Indonesia, Slovenia, Switzerland.

¹³ Croatia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Switzerland.

¹⁴ Angola, France, Malaysia, UK, USA, Venezuela, Algeria, Burundi, Croatia, Philippines, Indonesia, Luxembourg, ASEAN, EU, Human Security Network.

¹⁵ France, Malaysia, New Zealand, Croatia.

¹⁶ France, Croatia.

Considering CAAC in UN-mandated peace and political missions

- 16 delegations¹⁷ spoke more generally regarding the need for targeted training of peacekeepers and the role of peacekeeping on child protection, calling for stronger peacekeeping mandates with respect to child protection.
- 4 delegations¹⁸ called for mandatory pre-deployment training requirement for child protection training for all troop-contributing countries.
- 1 Member State¹⁹ endorsed Watchlist's messages for the Debate, including the call to prohibit government security forces listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report from contributing troops to UN-mandated missions, until the Secretary-General has certified the full implementation of their action plan.

Increasing effectiveness of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (SCWG-CAAC)

- 5 delegations²⁰ called for increase in range or frequency of the use of tools in the SCWG-CAAC's toolkit.
- 1 Member State²¹ endorsed all 6 Watchlist messages for the March 2015 Open Debate, including calling for the review of the effectiveness of the SCWG-CAAC's use of tools in the toolkit.

Other notable themes:

Accountability

- 28 delegations²² made explicit mentions of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a measure for dealing with the issue of ANSAs, citing its positive role.
- 14 delegations²³ specifically referred to sanctions designations as an effective tool to gain accountability from ANSAs on the issue of grave violations against children.
- 4 delegations²⁴ spoke about the importance of addressing the issue of persistent perpetrators in their statements.

Release and reintegration

- 8 Member States²⁵ cited reintegration of children as being crucial to prevent re-recruitment.
- 12 delegations²⁶ spoke of the importance of DDR programming as essential for children released from armed groups.
- 10 Member States²⁷ reiterated their strong support for the Paris Principles and Paris Commitments, encouraging those Member States that have not yet endorsed them to do so.

Prevention

- In their statements, 15 delegations²⁸ spoke about root causes that lead children to join ANSAs, for the purposes of tackling child recruitment issues (i.e. socio-economic marginalization).

¹⁷ France, Venezuela, Spain, Nordic Countries, Germany, EU, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Italy, Human Security Network, Burundi, Algeria, Montenegro, Luxembourg, Philippines, Portugal.

¹⁸ New Zealand, Angola, Switzerland, Croatia.

¹⁹ Croatia.

²⁰ Chad, Slovenia, Human Security Network, Montenegro, Croatia.

²¹ Croatia.

²² Chile, Lithuania, UK, Spain, Brazil, Nordic Countries, Germany, Guatemala, Estonia, Hungary, Australia, Albania, Italy, Slovenia, Austria*, Liechtenstein, Palestine, Slovakia, Philippines, Argentina, Croatia, Portugal, Poland, Republic of Korea, Uruguay, Montenegro, Benin, Gabon.

²³ Chad, Lithuania, Jordan, Chile, EU, Estonia, Philippines, Kazakhstan, Argentina, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Gabon, Germany, Australia.

²⁴ EU, Belgium, Australia, Italy, Slovenia.

²⁵ Lithuania, EU, Egypt, Thailand, Italy, Holy See, Croatia, Uruguay.

²⁶ France, Angola, USA, Chile, Venezuela, Guatemala, Canada, Human Security Network, South Africa, Uruguay, ASEAN, Benin.

²⁷ Malaysia, New Zealand, Chad, UK, Belgium, Australia, Croatia, Japan, Sri Lanka, Gabon.

- With respect to prevention, 3 Member States²⁹ spoke specifically about the importance of preventing ANSAs from acquiring small arms and light weapons (SALW) in order to protect children.

²⁸ New Zealand, Venezuela, India, Egypt, Belgium, Holy See, Poland, Morocco, AU, ASEAN, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Gabon.

²⁹ Angola, Lithuania, Chile.

