

Review of the August 2016 Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict

On August 2, 2016, the UN Security Council held an Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict (CAC) under the Presidency of Malaysia, Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The August Open Debate followed the publication of the Secretary-General's [15th Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict](#) covering the period from January 1 to December 31, 2015. Malaysia chose to focus the debate on several key topics, including the impact of extreme violence and displacement on children, which were also highlighted in the annual report. This Open Debate fell near the twentieth anniversary of the publication of Graça Machel's groundbreaking report, *Impact of armed conflict on children*, that prompted the UN General Assembly to establish the post of the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC) to serve as an independent advocate for the protection and well-being of children affected by war.

At the Open Debate, **69 delegations intervened, representing 98 countries**. The overall tone of the debate was mostly positive. Nearly half of the intervening delegations voiced support for the Council's CAC agenda and the mandate of the SRSG-CAAC, while reflecting on the agenda's accomplishments over the last 20 years.

Most prominently, the following themes were discussed in the delegations' statements: 1) need for accurate and credible listing of perpetrators of the six grave violations, free of politics and based on impartial, evidence-based reporting, and use of credible tools such as the UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM); 2) call for successful implementation of existing UN action plans with armed forces and groups listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual reports on children and armed conflict; 3) calls for maintaining the UN's specialized capacity to better monitor, report, and respond to child rights violations in the field, including on detention of children for their association with armed forces and armed groups, and attacks on health care; and 4) strengthening child rights protections within UN peacekeeping operations by ensuring greater accountability for, and prevention of, violations by UN peacekeepers.

Firstly, **30 delegations expressed their support for the SRSG-CAAC to carry out her mandate with impartiality and independence**, and **19 delegations discussed the importance of offering the Secretary-General needed support for ensuring impartial, evidence-based listing of perpetrators responsible for the grave violations against children**. In particular, **19 delegations stressed the importance of accurate and objective facts** as a determining factor towards ensuring accountability, and to that end, **22 delegations specifically mentioned the crucial role of the UN-led MRM**. Four delegations mentioned the importance of avoiding double standards in the application of listing criteria for safeguarding credibility of the CAC agenda.

Twenty-seven delegations welcomed the commitments by listed Governments through the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign led by the SRSG-CAAC and UNICEF, urging implementation of their action plans to end grave violations. **Nine delegations encouraged negotiation of similar commitments with armed non-state actors** which perpetrate a majority of the grave violations as listed in the annual reports.

Twelve delegations called for maintaining specialized child protection expertise within UN peace missions in form of the Child Protection Advisers, and **three delegations specifically called for consultation with Member States regarding the process of consolidating the child protection functions** within their human rights components. Eight delegations spoke more generally expressing the importance of maintaining and strengthening the child protection capacity of UN peace missions.

Given the Secretary-General's existing reporting on the detention of children for their association with armed forces and armed groups or other conflict-related abuses, **11 delegations urged Member States to treat children associated with armed groups, including those engaged in violent extremism, as victims entitled to full protection of their human rights**.

Eight delegations called for prioritizing their rehabilitation and reintegration, while seven called for urgently putting in place alternatives to detention and accountability processes consistent with international law. Three delegations called for the release of all children who have not been charged with a recognizable criminal offense to child protection actors.

Ten delegations spoke to the need to implement Resolution 2286 (2016) safeguarding health care from attack, which bears severe consequences for children, and one delegation specifically called upon the Secretary-General to include the specific impact of attacks on health facilities and workers on children in his reporting to the Council.

Lastly at this Open Debate, **seven delegations welcomed the Secretary-General's commitment to prohibit government armed forces listed in the annexes of his CAC reports from contributing troops** to peacekeeping operations until they have adopted and fully implemented their action plans to end the grave violations against children. **Five delegations urged investigation of all alleged violations against children committed by UN peacekeepers.** In particular, **four delegations urged Member States contributing troops and other uniformed and non-uniformed personnel to peacekeeping operations to make child protection training mandatory,** and one delegation made a specific call for this training to include prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict's analytical summary provides more detail on the above themes featured in the debate, and a more detailed overview of delegation statements related to Watchlist's [key recommendations to the UN Security Council](#).

Analytical Summary of the August 2016 Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict

Debate Format

- 3 UN officials (Secretary-General, SRSO-CAAC, and Executive Director UNICEF) briefed the Council. There was no civil society speaker at this Open Debate.
- 69 delegations¹ participated, including the European Union. Denmark delivered a statement on behalf of the Nordic Countries, Thailand on behalf of ASEAN, and Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, representing 98 countries.
- 8 new States² participated as compared to the previous debate.

Overall Tone: Mostly Positive

- 57 of 69 overall participants made generally positive remarks;
 - 12 delegations were critical of some aspects of the agenda, namely Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Syria, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Bahrain, Iraq, and Jordan.
- Factors contributing to a mostly positive tone include:
 - Consensus over the need to safeguard the CAC agenda in light of the particular pressure and scrutiny it faced this year regarding the highly controversial decision by the Secretary-General in June to remove the Saudi Arabia-led coalition from his list of parties committing grave violations against children.
 - Consensus over new and mounting challenges for the CAC agenda, namely the impact of extreme violence and forced displacement on the protections of the rights and security of children affected by armed conflict.

Themes in Delegation Statements:

Call for an accurate and credible listing of perpetrators of the six grave violations, based on impartial, evidence-based reporting

- 30³ delegations expressed their support for the mandate of the SRSO-CAAC and the CAC agenda;

¹ Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russia, Senegal, Spain, UK, Ukraine, Uruguay, USA, Venezuela, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada (individual and Group of Friends on CAC), Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark (Nordic Countries), Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Indonesia, Italy, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, Pakistan, Palestine, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia (individual and Human Security Network), Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Yemen, Thailand (individual and ASEAN), EU.

² Bahrain, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

³ Malaysia, USA, France, Venezuela, Russia, Angola, Japan, UK, Uruguay, Mexico, Luxembourg, Germany, Italy, ASEAN, Switzerland, EU, Guatemala, Human Security Network, Nordic Countries, Liechtenstein, Croatia, Australia, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Panama, Botswana, Canada (for GoF on CAC and individually), Greece.

- 19⁴ delegations discussed the importance of offering the Secretary-General support to ensure impartial and evidence-based listing of perpetrators responsible for grave violations against children, with 4⁵ delegations specifically mentioning the importance of avoiding double standards in the application of listing criteria in order to safeguard credibility of the mandate;
- 19⁶ delegations stressed the importance of accurate and objective facts as a determining factor for holding perpetrators of grave violations to account;
 - 22⁷ delegations specifically mentioned the crucial role of the UN-Led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) in this regard.

Call for successful implementation of existing UN action plans with armed forces and groups listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual reports on children and armed conflict

- 27⁸ delegations welcomed commitments made urging implementation by all Governments of action plans to end and prevent all child recruitment and use by their national security forces signed as a result of the campaign “Children, Not Soldiers” led by the SRSG-CAAC and UNICEF;
- 9⁹ delegations encouraged negotiation and implementation of the similar commitments with non-state armed actors to end violations against children by such actors.

Call for strengthened monitoring, reporting, and response to child rights violations on the ground

- 8¹⁰ delegations stressed the importance of maintaining and strengthening the capacity of UN peace missions to document and verify child rights violations, including through allocation of sufficient budgetary resources for child protection capacity;
 - 12¹¹ delegations specifically called for ensuring that child protection expertise is maintained in the form of Child Protection Advisers, including calls for maintaining their direct access to senior mission leadership and keeping their role as child protection actors separate from those of human rights monitors;
 - 3¹² delegations voiced specific need for consultation with the Member States regarding the process of consolidating child protection functions within the human rights components of the UN peace missions;
- Based on the monitoring and reporting by the Secretary-General on the detention of children who are detained for their association with armed forces or groups or other conflict-related abuses, 11¹³ delegations urged Member States to treat children associated with armed groups, including those engaged in violent extremism, as victims entitled to full protection of their human rights;
 - 8¹⁴ delegations called for prioritizing their rehabilitation and reintegration;
 - 7¹⁵ delegations called for urgently putting in place alternatives to detention and accountability processes that are consistent with international law for these children;
 - 3¹⁶ delegations specifically called on all parties to release all children who have not been charged with a recognizable criminal offense to relevant child protection actors;

⁴ Malaysia, USA, France, Spain, Venezuela, Russia, New Zealand, Uruguay, ASEAN, Switzerland, EU, Guatemala, Human Security Network, Nordic Countries, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Austria, Sri Lanka, Chile.

⁵ Spain, Venezuela, Netherlands, Chile.

⁶ Malaysia, USA, France, Spain, Russia, New Zealand, Uruguay, Mexico, Luxembourg, Germany, ASEAN, EU, Guatemala, Human Security Network, Nordic Countries, Liechtenstein, Croatia, Netherlands, GoF on CAC.

⁷ Malaysia, USA, France, Spain, Japan, UK, Uruguay, Mexico, Luxembourg, Germany, Italy, ASEAN, Guatemala, Human Security Network, Nordic Countries, Liechtenstein, Croatia, Netherlands, Belgium, Indonesia, Portugal, GoF on CAC.

⁸ Malaysia, France, Spain, Angola, New Zealand, Senegal, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Luxembourg, Germany, Italy, Thailand, EU, Guatemala, Nordic Countries, Croatia, Poland, Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Panama, GoF on CAC, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Vietnam.

⁹ France, Spain, Angola, Human Security Network, Australia, Argentina, Cambodia, GoF on CAC, Brazil.

¹⁰ Uruguay, Kazakhstan, Germany, Guatemala, Lithuania, Belgium, GoF on CAC, Jordan.

¹¹ Malaysia, France, Russia, Angola, Senegal, UK, Uruguay, Luxembourg, Nordic Countries, Lithuania, Portugal, Chile.

¹² Malaysia, Russia, UK.

¹³ Malaysia, Angola, New Zealand, Uruguay, Kazakhstan, Germany, Guatemala, Lithuania, Argentina, GoF on CAC, Chile.

¹⁴ Malaysia, Venezuela, Angola, New Zealand, Uruguay, Guatemala, Liechtenstein, Argentina.

¹⁵ Malaysia, France, Venezuela, Angola, New Zealand, Uruguay, Argentina.

¹⁶ New Zealand, Guatemala, Sri Lanka.

- 10¹⁷ delegations spoke about the severe impact of attacks on health care on children and the importance of implementing Resolution 2286 (2016) towards ensuring greater protection of children;
 - 1¹⁸ delegation particularly encouraged the Secretary-General to include information on the specific impact on children of attacks on health facilities and health workers in his reporting to the Council.

Call for stronger protection of children's rights within UN peacekeeping operations

- 7¹⁹ delegations welcomed the Secretary-General's commitment to prohibit government armed forces listed in the annexes to his CAC reports from contributing troops to peacekeeping operations until they have adopted, and fully implemented, action plans to end grave violations against children, pursuant to SCR 2242 (2015);
 - 5²⁰ delegations urged investigation of allegations of violations against children committed by UN peacekeepers including criminal prosecution;
- 4²¹ delegations urged Member States contributing troops and other uniformed and non-uniformed personnel to peacekeeping operations to make comprehensive pre-deployment training on child protection mandatory;
 - 1²² delegation specifically called for training for civil and military peacekeepers on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Other notable themes:

Extreme violence

- 31²³ delegations expressed concerns regarding the impact of extreme violence on children's rights and protections;
- 9²⁴ delegations stressed the importance of tackling the root causes of extreme violence and conflict in order to prevent future violations, such as through education.

Displacement

- 24²⁵ delegations expressed concerns regarding the negative impact of displacement on the rights and protection of children on the ground, and the increasing challenges in meeting their needs;
- 8²⁶ delegations linked added vulnerabilities of children on the move to the grave violations of their rights, and 6²⁷ delegations specifically mentioned particular heightened risks for unaccompanied children.

Education

- 14²⁸ delegations generally expressed concerns over attacks and threats of attacks against schools, with 12²⁹ delegations specifically voicing concerns regarding the practice of the military use of schools by parties to conflict;
- 13³⁰ delegations mentioned their endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration, made public on the occasion of the Oslo Conference on Safe Schools: Protecting Education from Attack on 28-29 May, with 3³¹ delegations specifically calling on other Member States to endorse the Declaration.

¹⁷ Egypt, Angola, New Zealand, Spain, Uruguay, Kazakhstan, Australia, Argentina, Botswana, Chile.

¹⁸ Switzerland.

¹⁹ UK, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Australia, Canada, Jordan.

²⁰ New Zealand, Mexico, Switzerland, Guatemala, Croatia.

²¹ Angola, EU, Nordic Countries, Portugal.

²² Uruguay.

²³ Malaysia, USA, France, China, Spain, Venezuela, Russia, Angola, Senegal, Uruguay, Iran, Saudi Arabia, EU, Holy See, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Morocco, Netherlands, Austria, Cambodia, Belgium, Panama, Sri Lanka, GoF on CAC, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Brazil, Iraq, Chile, Turkey, Azerbaijan.

²⁴ France, Ukraine, EU, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Belgium, Sri Lanka, Chile, Azerbaijan.

²⁵ Malaysia, US, China, Ukraine, Angola, Japan, Uruguay, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Italy, EU, Israel, Croatia, Morocco, Austria, Cambodia, Panama, Canada (for GoF on CAC and individually), Greece, Bangladesh, Brazil, Turkey, Azerbaijan.

²⁶ Malaysia, Uruguay, Mexico, EU, Israel, Croatia, Cambodia, GoF on CAC.

²⁷ Malaysia, Angola, Uruguay, Italy, Croatia, Bangladesh.

²⁸ France, Ukraine, Angola, New Zealand, UK, Uruguay, Kazakhstan, Poland, Slovenia, Nordic Countries, Argentina, Botswana, Brazil, Qatar.

²⁹ Ukraine, New Zealand, Senegal, EU, Lithuania, Poland, Argentina, DRC, Portugal, GoF on CAC, Bangladesh, Brazil.

³⁰ Angola, New Zealand, Kazakhstan, Italy, Guatemala, Slovenia, Poland, Argentina, Botswana, DRC, Greece, Chile, Qatar.

³¹ New Zealand, Slovenia, Argentina.

Speaker:	Support for CAC mandate/SRSG	Support for MIRM	Credible, accurate, impartial listing and politics	Strengthened monitoring, reporting and response	UN mission capacity	Extreme violence	Monitor and report detention of children	Children as victims first, legitimate accountability	Report on impact of attacks on healthcare/SCR 2286	Implementation of action plans/campaign	Negotiate action plans with ANSAs	Prohibit listed states from contributing troops	Investigate/prosecute violations by PKOs	Mandatory pre-deployment training	SEA training/oversight by DPKO	Displacement	Safe Schools Declaration
Japan	P	P								P						P	
Venezuela	P		P			P											
US	P	P	P			P										P	
Ukraine						P										P	
Egypt																P	
Angola	P				P	P		P	P	P	P			P		P	P
Senegal					P	P				P							
Uruguay	P	P	P	P	P	P		P							P		
Argentina								P	P	P	P						P
Australia	P								P	P	P	P					
Austria	P		P			P										P	
Azerbaijan						P										P	
Bahrain			N			P											
Bangladesh						P				P						P	
Belgium	P	P		P		P											
Brazil						P				P	P					P	
Botswana	P										P						P
Cambodia						P										P	
Canada****	P	P				P		P		P	P					P	
Canada	P			P								P				P	
Chile			P		P	P		P	P	P							P
Colombia																	
Croatia	P	P								P			P			P	

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Democratic Republic of the Congo		N															P
Denmark*	P	P	P		P					P				P			
Germany	P	P		P				P		P							
Greece	P															P	P
Guatemala	P	P	P	P				P		P			P				P
Holy See						P											
Italy	P	P								P						P	P
Iraq			N			P											
Iran			N			P											
Israel																P	
Jordan			N	P													
Kazakhstan				P				P		P						P	P
Kuwait		N	N														
Liechtenstein	P	P	P			P						P					
Lithuania				P	P	P		P									
Luxembourg	P	P			P					P		P					
Mexico	P	P								P			P			P	
Morocco									P							P	
Myanmar																	
Netherlands	P	P	P			P			P	P							
Pakistan			N														

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Palestine																	
Panama	P					P				P						P	
Philippines																	
Poland										P							P
Portugal		P			P				P	P				P			
Qatar																	P
Saudi Arabia			N			P											
Slovenia																	P
Slovenia***	P	P	P						P		P						
Sri Lanka			P			P											
Sudan		N	N														
Switzerland	P		P						P			P	P				
Syria	N		N														
Thailand										P							
Turkey						P										P	
United Arab Emirates			N														
Vietnam																	
Yemen		N	N														
ASEAN**	P	P	P														
European Union	P		P			P				P		P		P		P	

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Total Positive mentioning	30	22	19	8	12	31	0	11	11	27	9	7	5	4	1	24	13
Total Negative Mentioning	1	4	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0