



Security Council

Distr.: General
21 December 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 20 December 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Given that my time as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is coming to an end, I would like to share some reflections in order to build on our experiences.

We are pleased to see that there has been significant and increased attention paid to the plight of children affected by conflict around the world, including in the Security Council. Progress has been made with regard to the recruitment of child soldiers and how children's rights are protected in some peace agreements (e.g., in Colombia). Action plans have been entered into and important conclusions adopted.

Unfortunately, we have also witnessed a continued and, in some cases, worsening disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law, including an increase in violations and abuses against children in many conflicts around the world. Some 350 million children are affected by armed conflict today, and we are not doing nearly enough to protect them. This reality demands an even stronger engagement in the United Nations, both in the field and at Headquarters, in dialogues with Member States and at the Security Council.

How we treat children affected by armed conflict has a bearing on their future and the future of their communities and their countries. Shielding children from the worst effects of war will improve the chances of preventing new cycles of conflict and sustaining peace in the future. Building on the Secretary-General's prevention agenda, governments, the United Nations and civil society need to do more to promote the links between child protection and the rights of the child, on the one hand, and preventing conflict and sustaining peace, on the other.

The adoption of Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#) with a record 98 co-sponsors shows the broad support that exists for the children and armed conflict agenda. This resolution now needs to be translated into reality.

The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is efficiently adopting conclusions within a one- to two-month time frame and making regular field visits. We hope that we have left a solid base for the next Chair and other Council members to build on.

Ambition inside the Working Group alone, however, is not sufficient. There needs to be a step change in how the Security Council deals with the children and armed conflict agenda in its daily work. The rights of children need to be put at the centre of all decisions and deliberations of the Council, where relevant. Action needs



to be consistent and without political prejudice. The plight of a child in the Syrian Arab Republic is of the same concern as the child suffering in Myanmar, South Sudan or Yemen. Resources must be devoted to put qualified experts on the ground, including in peacekeeping operations and special political missions. United Nations country teams must be resourced to include monitoring and reporting expertise. There must also be adequate resources for programming.

While the Security Council may be divided on some issues, one thing on which we all agree is protecting children from the scourge of war. By building on this unity, I hope that further progress can be made in the coming years to make a real difference to children in countries affected by conflict.

In order to build on the momentum and translate political commitments to real and meaningful action for the children whom we look to protect, I want to convey some reflections outlined below.

Mainstreaming the children and armed conflict agenda in the Security Council

- It is important that the children and armed conflict agenda not be “delegated” to the Working Group, nor that the Chair of the Working Group be seen as a “focal point” for children and armed conflict in the Security Council. The agenda needs the strong support of all Council members and initiatives in that regard by all of them.
- Children and armed conflict should be not only on the agenda of the Security Council during the open debate, but also raised and discussed in all relevant geographic settings. For example, during our presidency of the Council in July, we organized the monthly humanitarian meeting on the Syrian Arab Republic with a focus on children and armed conflict and invited the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict as a special presenter.
- The Security Council should continue to call for so-called “any other business” on children and armed conflict, including for briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict after her field visits.
- Operationalizing the children and armed conflict agenda throughout the entire work of the Security Council work is key, in particular by adopting a child protection perspective in mandate renewals, statements of the President of the Security Council and other relevant decisions.
- It is up to all members of the Security Council to ensure follow-up to the conclusions adopted in the Working Group and make these concerns a central part of messaging during Council field visits to conflict-affected areas, among other things. This is not solely the work of the Chair of the Working Group.
- Child protection advisers also need to be given the appropriate resources to carry out their important work in United Nations missions.

Conflict prevention and children and armed conflict: implementing Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#)

The Security Council, in its resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#), emphasized how the children and armed conflict agenda was integral to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Below are a few thoughts on how to further implement it.

- First, children’s needs are often overlooked when peace is negotiated. To provide tools for actors involved in mediation and peace processes, and in response to the request made in the statement by the President of the Security

Council on 31 October 2017 (S/PRST/2017/21), a process to develop practical guidance on the integration of child protection issues into peace processes was officially launched by the Secretary-General and the Prime Minister of Sweden, Stefan Löfven, on 6 July 2018. This process is ongoing and needs to be followed up.

- Second, the Security Council, in its resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#), set out a framework for the reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups. The new Global Coalition for Reintegration will be key to the implementation of the framework.
- Third, the Security Council, in its resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#), recognized that access for all girls and boys to education and health care, including mental health, in conflict was essential, and we therefore all need to step up our efforts to make sure this becomes a reality, including by asking the Secretariat for reporting on this in relevant conflicts.
- Fourth, for the first time, the Security Council, in its resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#), distinguished between girls and boys and made the point that their needs and vulnerabilities are different. The Council needs to ensure that Council-mandated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and security sector reform are child- and gender-sensitive.
- Fifth, the children and armed conflict agenda is linked in resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#) to the Sustainable Development Goals. To implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must ensure that no child is left behind and that the links between that agenda and development are explored more.
- Sixth, the Security Council, for the first time in one of its resolutions, stated the central principle that children affected by armed conflict should be treated primarily as victims. We need to uphold a clear child rights perspective in discussions in the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1373 \(2001\)](#) concerning counter-terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.
- Lastly, the Working Group can also play a larger role in prevention, not least through early warning and the global horizontal note. For example, in 2017, together with France, we called for an “any other business” session in the Security Council on the situation of children in Kasai, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following a briefing based on the note made to the Working Group. This was a good example of how an issue can be transferred from the Working Group to the Council.

Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

- The Working Group should be able to adopt at least six to seven conclusions annually. The Chair, in consultation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, should decide on an annual workplan so that the Working Group can prepare the introduction of six to seven reports annually.
- Follow-up could be further increased by more frequent use of videoconferencing and other updates from the field and press statements. The United Nations Children’s Fund and country teams should be invited to attend more regular follow-up sessions after the adoption of conclusions to update the Working Group, perhaps within 6 or 12 months following the adoption of new conclusions. The World Bank and other donors could also be invited to follow-up sessions.

- In addition, the practice of joint meetings with relevant sanctions committees should be continued.
- Field visits are essential, and we would recommend conducting one field visit annually. Ideally, it would be timed with other engagements and visits, such as the negotiation of conclusions in the Working Group and visits by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.
- Unfortunately, the lack of a budget for the field visits of the Working Group means that it is difficult for many Security Council members to join. We would encourage the incoming Chair to continue discussions on how this issue could be solved.

I should be grateful if you could have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Olof **Skoog**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative
