



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS



Security Council Open Debate on "Effective strategies to end and prevent grave violations against children" under the agenda item "Children and armed conflict"
25 June 2025

Greece's Statement delivered
by HE Ambassador Evangelos Sekeris,
Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations, New York

Thank you very much, Your Excellency, Madame Minister.

I would like to thank Guyana for organizing this very important Open Debate. I also thank Special Representative of Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Virginia Gamba, Ms. Sheema Sen Gupta from UNICEF, for their briefings, and I also commend Sila, our CSO Briefer for her strong testimony.

We would like to commend the continued work, effort and dedication of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and her strong engagement to the protection of children. We also thank UNICEF for the invaluable contribution.

Madame President,

UN Secretary-General's latest annual report on Children and armed conflict paints a grim picture of violence and an erosion of respect for international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law: 2024 bore witness to an alarming escalation of grave violations against children caught in armed conflicts.

Children are killed or maimed, often bearing the brunt of life-long disabilities, in many cases by the widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas; they are denied safe, timely and unimpeded access to life-saving humanitarian assistance; they are recruited and used in the fields of war; children are subjected to sexual violence that is

blatantly and systematically used as a tactic of war, as well as to other violations of their rights to life, safety, health, dignity, education, recovery and social reintegration. Equally alarming is the fact that killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access are mainly attributed to State actors, while non-State armed groups perpetrated in 2024 almost 50 per cent of grave violations.

Having reached unprecedented levels of violence against children is particularly true in situations in Israel/Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Nigeria, Haiti, Lebanon, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Ukraine.

Madame President,

Greece strongly condemns all grave violations and abuses against children in armed conflict. We are deeply concerned about the extreme levels of violence reflected in the detailed review of 26 conflict situations in the Secretary-General's latest annual report. We call upon all parties to conflict to abide by international humanitarian law and human rights law, including the respect to the special protections afforded to children, to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded access of children to humanitarian assistance, and to respect and protect humanitarian personnel, assets and civilian infrastructure.

Greece welcomes the annual report as an insightful call not just for reflection on one of the gravest affronts to international law, but also for action in order to protect children from the devastating impact of wars.

Madame President,

Greece reiterates its strong support to UN mandate for Children and Armed Conflict as a strategic component of UN peace and security work. As Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, we take on this responsibility with the firm commitment to advance the protection of children. Our goal is to develop an inclusive, carefully balanced, impartial, constructive, action-oriented approach, in close cooperation with our partners in the Group, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNICEF, UN agencies and civil society representatives.

Recognizing the urgent need to end and prevent violations and abuses against children, I would like to emphasize the following brief points:

We call upon all parties to conflict, especially those listed in the Annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report, to engage with UN and to develop credible action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children. We urge the parties who have already signed Action Plans to implement them.

Greece stresses the need to hold perpetrators of grave violations accountable and encourages Governments to undertake initiatives that facilitate relevant investigations and contribute to timely and meaningful administration of justice.

Evidence of sexual violence against children is nothing less than shocking, all the more if we consider that the reported increase represents "the tip of the iceberg", as this violation is vastly underreported. We need to ensure that parties to conflict take measures to end and prevent this violation, and that sexual and reproductive health services are provided to child victims.

Greece commends the unwavering commitment of child protection actors who, despite reduced funding and the scaling down of UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions, continue to deliver coordinated and effective action.

Madame President,

In closing, let me stress that this year marks three key anniversaries: 80 years since the UN Charter, our road map to a better future, 20 years since Resolution 1612 (2005), establishing the CAAC Working Group, and 25 years since the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

On this occasion, I think that we should ask ourselves: Do we live up to our promises to children? Our answer must come through actions, not words. We have to remain true to our commitment to defend children; for, if the child survives, then there is hope.

I thank you.