



Security Council

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Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Conclusions on Children and Armed Conflict in South Sudan

1. At a formal meeting held on 31 March 2023, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict examined the fourth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in South Sudan (S/2023/99), covering the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2022, which was introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Permanent Representative of South Sudan also addressed the Working Group (see annex).

2. The members of the Working Group expressed deep concern at the six grave violations, which continue to be committed by all parties against children affected by armed conflict in South Sudan, as well as at the security situation and the protracted nature of the conflict. They expressed particular concern at the continuing recruitment and use of children, which remains the most prevailing violation; the ongoing killing and maiming of children, in particular by explosive remnants of war; and the cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. They were encouraged by the overall decrease in the number of verified incidents of the six grave violations against children, welcomed the commitments made by the Government and other signatories to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to continue to implement the comprehensive action plan to end and prevent the six grave violations against children, and further encouraged the Government to prioritize its implementation. They also expressed their concern at the low levels of accountability, in particular for sexual violence. They further welcomed the launch of mobile court martials in that regard and encouraged the Government to ensure that special justice measures meet the needs of all victims and survivors, including child survivors, and to hold all perpetrators to account, including at senior levels. Members commended the engagement of the Government with the United Nations, in particular on the legislative framework and the implementation of the comprehensive action plan. It encouraged the strengthening of that cooperation and of the implementation of the comprehensive action plan, as well as access to barracks provided by the Government to the United Nations for screening and age verification exercises, and also encouraged the continuation of such efforts. They also expressed their deep concern at the escalating intercommunal violence and its devastating impact on children. They urged all parties to conflict to end and prevent the six grave violations against children, uphold their obligations in accordance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and take all action necessary to better protect children and prevent such violations.



3. The members of the Working Group welcomed the report of the Secretary-General. Further to the meeting, and subject to and consistent with applicable international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions [1612 \(2005\)](#), [1882 \(2009\)](#), [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2068 \(2012\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#), [2225 \(2015\)](#), [2427 \(2018\)](#) and [2601 \(2021\)](#), the Working Group agreed to the direct action as set out below.

Public statement by the Chair of the Working Group

4. The Working Group agreed to address a message to all parties to armed conflict in South Sudan, including the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) – pro-Machar, through a public statement by its Chair:

(a) Strongly condemning all violations and abuses that continue to be committed against children in South Sudan, including violations of international humanitarian law; expressing grave concern at the disproportionate negative impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on children; urging all parties to the conflict immediately to end and prevent all abuses and violations of applicable international law involving the recruitment and use of children, abduction, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access, and to comply in full with all their obligations under international law; and noting the decrease in the overall number of violations verified since the previous report;

(b) Calling upon all parties to continue to prioritize the implementation of the previous conclusions of the Working Group ([S/AC.51/2021/1](#));

(c) Stressing that the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration and that the specific needs and vulnerabilities of girls and boys, including those with disabilities, should be duly considered when planning and carrying out action concerning children in situations of armed conflict;

(d) Welcoming the inclusion of child protection provisions in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and stressing that the implementation of the peace agreement offers important opportunities to put the rights and needs of children at the centre of efforts aimed at achieving sustainable peace, justice and reconciliation in South Sudan; underlining the importance of taking child protection concerns into account in any future peace negotiations, and in that regard calling for the dissemination and application of the Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict; and urging all parties engaged in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement to ensure that the protection, rights, well-being and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict are incorporated in full into all efforts on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as appropriate and in consultation with child protection actors, including efforts relating to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and security sector reform, and to encourage and facilitate the consideration of the views of children in those processes, noting in this regard the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles);

(e) Welcoming the progress made by the parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in the implementation of the peace agreement and the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity;

(f) Calling upon the parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to implement it in full, including those provisions on prohibitions against the recruitment of child soldiers and forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and underscoring in that regard the importance that the United Nations continue to support and monitor its implementation;

(g) Reaffirming the importance of accountability for all violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict; stressing that all perpetrators of such acts must be brought swiftly to justice and held accountable without undue delay, including through timely and systematic investigation and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction; stressing the need to address the prevalence of impunity for violations and abuses against children; urging the Government of South Sudan to put an end to impunity by ensuring that all perpetrators of violations and abuses are brought swiftly to justice and held accountable, including through the designation of a focal point on children and armed conflict in the Ministry of Justice, through rigorous, timely, independent and impartial investigations and prosecutions; noting that, in the comprehensive action plan concluded on 7 February 2020 to end and prevent all grave violations against children, the parties gave their commitment to investigating the six grave violations, criminalizing the violations, where appropriate, and strengthening specialized units within the judiciary to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate violations; stressing the need to ensure that all victims and survivors have access to justice, as well as that all children have access to gender-sensitive, age-appropriate, disability-inclusive, non-discriminatory and comprehensive child protection services, including psychosocial and health, including sexual and reproductive health, services, access to education and vocational training, livelihood support, social reintegration, access to justice, and specialized services for child survivors of sexual and gender-based violence; and encouraging engagement between the Government and the United Nations to strengthen the Government's overall legal framework to safeguard children's rights;

(h) Condemning the recruitment and use of children by all parties to the armed conflict to fulfil various roles, including in combat, as cooks, porters, messengers and bodyguards, participating in military parades or performing security duties; noting that recruitment and use remained the most verified of the six grave violations affecting children and that cases of recruitment and use can be connected to the other five grave violations; underscoring that the intensification of conflict, the emergence of new armed groups, insecurity, poverty and the lack of opportunities were reported to be potential drivers of child recruitment and use; and strongly urging all parties to armed conflict in South Sudan to immediately cease the recruitment and use of children, and to immediately and without precondition release and hand over to child protection actors all children associated with them, in accordance with established protocols, ensuring that such children be treated primarily as victims, to enable their full reintegration into their communities and to prevent further recruitment and use of children in line with their obligations as set out in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;

(i) Encouraging the Government to continue to focus on long-term, sustainable and timely reintegration and rehabilitation programmes and opportunities for children affected by armed conflict that are gender- and age-sensitive and inclusive for children with disabilities, including equal access to health care, psychosocial support and education programmes, as well as to raise awareness and work with communities to avoid stigmatization of these children, to facilitate their return and minimize the risk of re-recruitment, while taking into account the specific needs of girls and boys, in order to contribute to the well-being of children and to sustainable peace and security;

(j) Condemning the ongoing killing and maiming of children by all parties engaged in armed conflict in South Sudan, including as a result of crossfire between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and armed groups, intercommunal and subnational violence, military operations carried out by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and raids carried out by armed groups on villages, and explosive remnants of war; urging all parties to respect human rights and comply with international humanitarian law and take all action necessary to better protect children and prevent such violations and abuses; further calling upon the Government to invest in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, security sector reform and demining efforts, especially with a view to ensuring that children are protected from explosive remnants of war; noting that such explosive remnants of war continued to be a leading cause of child casualties; and encouraging all parties to the conflict to further engage with the Mine Action Service on demining efforts, as well as invest in and expand the explosive ordnance risk education programmes for children, through further engagement with the United Nations Children's Fund;

(k) Condemning the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual violence, including a sharp increase in conflict-related sexual violence in the first half of 2022, including gang rape and attempted rape, against children, in particular girls; strongly urging all parties to take immediate and specific measures to put an end to and prevent the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children by members of their respective forces or groups; stressing the importance of accountability for those who commit sexual or gender-based violence against children and of providing survivors of such acts with adequate protection, appropriate assistance and reliable recourse to justice; further encouraging the parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to accelerate the implementation of their respective action plans on addressing conflict-related sexual violence; noting that recent fragmentations and defections have resulted in violence and civilian casualties and increased the vulnerability of children to sexual violence during the reporting period; noting with concern that the full scale of sexual violence affecting children in South Sudan is underreported owing to fear of stigmatization, cultural norms, lack of awareness, fear of reprisals and lack of accountability, and the absence of adequate support services for survivors; and stressing the importance of providing non-discriminatory and comprehensive specialized services to survivors of sexual violence, including psychosocial and health, including sexual and reproductive health, services and legal and livelihood support and services;

(l) While noting the reduction of verified attacks on schools and hospitals by 50 per cent compared with the previous reporting period, condemning the continuation of attacks on schools and hospitals in violation of international law and attacks on protected persons by all parties engaged in armed conflict in South Sudan, as well as looting and attacks on medical and educational personnel; expressing concern at the military use of schools and hospitals by armed forces and armed groups; and calling upon all parties to armed conflict to comply with applicable international law and to respect the civilian character of schools and hospitals, including their personnel, as such, and to end and prevent attacks or threats of attacks against those institutions and their personnel, as well as the military use of schools and hospitals in violation of international law, including international humanitarian law;

(m) Recalling the endorsement of and the need to implement in full the Safe Schools Declaration by the Government of South Sudan; encouraging the Government to ensure that attacks on schools are investigated, that children have access to education and that those responsible for violating international humanitarian law and human rights law are held accountable; and stressing in this regard the

importance of implementing Security Council resolution [2601 \(2021\)](#) and ensuring the right to education;

(n) Strongly condemning the abductions of children, of which more than 80 per cent were attributed to non-State actors, including the National Salvation Front, the National People's Alliance Movement and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) pro-Machar and the SPLA-IO Kitgwang faction, including for the purposes of recruitment and use, rape and other forms of sexual violence, including forced marriage, while others were also abducted to advance military agendas and demonstrate prowess, or for defying orders; and urging all parties immediately to release without precondition all abducted children in their captivity to the relevant civilian child protection actors;

(o) Expressing grave concern at incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including the killing of and attacks on humanitarian personnel, entry restrictions for humanitarian personnel and threats and violence against them, and looting and ambushes on humanitarian convoys, of which humanitarian non-governmental organizations were also affected; and calling upon all parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law, safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access, consistent with United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance and the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, to respect the exclusively humanitarian nature and impartiality of humanitarian aid and to respect the work of all United Nations agencies and humanitarian actors without adverse distinction;

(p) Expressing deep concern about the protracted nature of the conflict and the escalating intercommunal violence and pockets of subnational violence throughout South Sudan, putting children at high risk of the six grave violations, noting that throughout the reporting period armed groups splintered and disintegrated, which often resulted in localized fighting and might lead to a heightened risk of a renewed increase in instances of the six grave violations; and urging all parties to the conflict to engage in community-based reconciliation efforts and to commit themselves to intercommunal dialogue initiatives, especially those supported by the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS);

(q) Recalling that the Security Council, by its resolutions, including [2206 \(2015\)](#), [2521 \(2020\)](#), [2577 \(2021\)](#), and [2633 \(2022\)](#), decided to apply financial and travel measures to individuals and entities as designated for such measures by the Committee established pursuant to paragraph 16 of resolution [2206 \(2015\)](#) for actions that may include but are not limited to the following:

- (i) Planning, directing or committing acts that violate applicable international human rights law or international humanitarian law, or acts that constitute human rights abuses, in South Sudan;
- (ii) The use or recruitment of children by armed groups or armed forces in the context of the armed conflict in South Sudan;
- (iii) Planning, directing or committing acts involving sexual and gender-based violence in South Sudan;
- (iv) The targeting of civilians, including women and children, through the planning, directing or commission of acts of violence (including killing, maiming, torture or rape), abduction, enforced disappearance, forced displacement, or attacks on schools, hospitals, religious sites or locations where civilians are seeking refuge, or through other conduct that would constitute a violation of international human rights law, including serious abuses of human rights, or a violation of international humanitarian law;

- (v) The obstruction of the activities of international peacekeeping, diplomatic or humanitarian missions in South Sudan, including the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, or of the delivery or distribution of or access to humanitarian assistance;
- (vi) Attacks against United Nations missions, international security presences or other peacekeeping operations or humanitarian personnel;
- (r) Expressing its readiness to communicate to the Security Council pertinent information with a view to assisting the Council in the imposition of targeted measures on perpetrators.

5. The Working Group agreed to address a message, through a public statement by the Chair of the Working Group, to community and religious leaders:

- (a) Emphasizing the important role of community and religious leaders in strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict;
- (b) Urging them to publicly condemn and continue to advocate ending and preventing violations and abuses against children, in particular those involving the recruitment and use of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, killing and maiming, abductions, attacks and threats of attacks against schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access, and to engage with the Government, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders to support the reintegration and rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict in their communities, including by raising awareness to avoid stigmatization of these children.

Recommendations to the Security Council

6. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter addressed to the Government of South Sudan:

- (a) Expressing grave concern at the violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict during the reporting period, including those involving the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access; noting in this regard the delisting of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces for the reported violations involving attacks on schools and hospitals during the reporting period; expressing grave concern at the disproportionate negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children; further expressing concern at the continued military use of schools in violation of applicable international law; calling for an immediate halt to such violations and abuses and holding those responsible to account; recalling that the primary responsibility for the protection of children in South Sudan lies with the Government of South Sudan; and urging the Government to continue to take positive steps in that regard, while noting the decrease in the overall number of violations since the previous report;
- (b) Welcoming the decree of 11 June 2022 on the formation of the National Human Rights Council, comprising the Ministers of Justice, Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, of Defence and Veteran Affairs, of the Interior, of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces child protection director, and the consequent elevation of the children and armed conflict agenda at the national level;
- (c) Also welcoming the commitment of the parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to the comprehensive action plan, and calling upon the Government to implement it in full;

further welcoming the establishment of the high-level ministerial and the national level technical committees as critical oversight structures for the implementation of the comprehensive action plan; further welcoming the formation of the unified command structure of the necessary unified forces, which has improved conditions for monitoring and reporting, and screening and age verification exercises in military barracks and cantonment sites; and encouraging the Government to seek the continued support of the United Nations for its implementation and monitoring;

(d) Reaffirming the importance of accountability for all violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict; urging the Government of South Sudan to put an end to impunity by ensuring that all perpetrators of violations and abuses are brought swiftly to justice and are held accountable, including by signing the memorandum of understanding with the African Union to establish the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, and through timely, independent and systematic investigations and prosecutions; noting with regret the lack of progress made in the establishment of the Hybrid Court and the Compensation and Reparation Authority, while noting the launch of public consultations for the establishment of the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing in April 2022; noting that, in the comprehensive action plan concluded on 7 February 2020 to end and prevent all grave violations against children, the parties gave their commitment to investigating the six grave violations, criminalizing the violations, where applicable, and strengthening specialized units within the judiciary to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate violations, including through the designation of a focal point on children and armed conflict in the Ministry of Justice, and in this regard welcoming the launch of mobile general and district court martials in several parts of the country; stressing the need to ensure that all victims and survivors have access to justice, and in this regard encouraging the Government to redouble its efforts towards the permanent constitution drafting process to ensure that special justice measures meet the needs of all victims and survivors; further stressing the need to ensure access to gender- and age-sensitive comprehensive specialized services, inclusive also to children with disabilities, including psychosocial and health services, education and vocational training, livelihood support and social reintegration; and encouraging the Government to engage with the United Nations to strengthen its overall legal framework and institutional capacities to safeguard children's rights;

(e) Condemning the recruitment and use of children by government security forces; strongly urging them immediately to cease recruitment and use, and immediately and without precondition to release and hand over all children associated with them to civilian child protection actors, in accordance with established protocols, to enable their full reintegration into their communities and to prevent further recruitment and use of children in line with its obligations as set out in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to which it has acceded; and encouraging increased access to barracks provided by the Government to the United Nations for screening and age verification exercises;

(f) Encouraging the Government to focus on comprehensive and sustainable reintegration and rehabilitation opportunities for children affected by armed conflict that are gender- and age-sensitive, including equal access to health care, psychosocial support and education programmes; encouraging the parties to the conflict to continue to cooperate with the United Nations and the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, as well as raise awareness and work with communities to avoid stigmatization of these children, to facilitate their return and minimize the risk of re-recruitment, through, among others, education provided in a safe environment, while taking into account the specific needs of girls and boys, in order to contribute to the well-being of children and to sustainable peace and security,

noting the significant challenge to reintegration efforts due to the lack of school and vocational training institutions;

(g) Calling upon the Government to prioritize the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups as part of the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and to ensure that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and the security sector reform take into account in full at all stages the specific needs of girls and boys and the protection of their rights and to ensure that they are gender-and age-sensitive, and to allocate sufficient resources to that end;

(h) Expressing concern at incidents of the killing and maiming of children in South Sudan, including as a result of military operations; urging the Government to strengthen its efforts to better protect children and prevent such incidents involving violations; and further calling upon the Government to invest in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, security sector reform, demining efforts and explosive ordnance risk education, especially with a view to ensuring that children are protected from explosive remnants of war;

(i) Expressing grave concern about the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual violence, including gang rape, against children by all parties engaged in armed conflict in South Sudan, while noting with concern that most of the verified violations were attributable to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces; strongly urging the Government to take immediate and specific measures to put an end to and prevent the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children by members of their respective forces or groups; stressing the importance of accountability for those who commit sexual or gender-based violence against children; expressing concern at the low rate of accountability and the impunity surrounding sexual violence; noting that the availability of comprehensive, appropriate survivor-centred assistance for child survivors of sexual violence remains inadequate; urging the Government to strengthen the legal framework and the application of statutory legal frameworks to support the prosecution of sexual and gender-based crimes, reparations and redress to survivors; further encouraging the Government, as a party to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, to accelerate the implementation of its action plans on addressing conflict-related sexual violence; and noting that the formation of the unified command structure of the necessary unified forces in April 2022 can contribute to decreasing the vulnerability of children to sexual violence during the reporting period;

(j) Calling upon the Government to enforce existing national legislation and establish specialized national capacity within key civilian and military justice authorities to investigate and prosecute serious conflict-related cases, including violations and abuses against children, and to consider designating in the Ministry of Justice a focal point on children and armed conflict;

(k) Condemning the continuation of attacks on schools and hospitals, including by government security forces, in violation of international law, which affected children's access to education; expressing concern at the military use of schools and hospitals by armed forces and armed groups; and calling upon the Government to comply with applicable international law and to respect the civilian character of schools and hospitals, including their personnel, as such, and to end and prevent attacks or threats of attacks against those institutions and their personnel, as well as the military use of schools and hospitals;

(l) Recalling the endorsement of and the need to implement the Safe Schools Declaration by the Government of South Sudan; and encouraging the Government to

ensure that attacks on schools are investigated and that those responsible for violating international humanitarian law are duly prosecuted;

(m) Expressing concern at incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including entry restrictions for humanitarian personnel, threats and violence against and killing of humanitarian personnel, looting and ambushes on humanitarian convoys; and calling upon all parties to armed conflict to allow and facilitate, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law, safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access, consistent with United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance and the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, to respect the exclusively humanitarian nature and impartiality of humanitarian aid and to respect the work of all United Nations agencies and humanitarian actors without adverse distinction;

(n) Calling upon the Government of South Sudan to ensure the enforcement of military command orders and punitive directives, in particular those prohibiting the recruitment and use of children, to create child protection units and specific frameworks within all divisions of the armed forces, to continue to ensure that the United Nations is given unhindered access for the verification and release of those children associated with the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, and to conduct in full the joint monitoring, verification and awareness-raising activities of the Joint Verification Committee; and ordering the vacation of all schools and any hospitals used by government security forces;

(o) Further urging the Government of South Sudan to establish an effective vetting mechanism to ensure that no perpetrators of violations or abuses against children are integrated or recruited into government security forces, and to systematically dismiss all perpetrators of violations or abuses committed against children from its forces, irrespective of their ranks, and hold them accountable;

(p) Inviting the Government of South Sudan to keep the Working Group informed of its efforts to implement the recommendations of the Working Group and the Secretary-General, as appropriate.

7. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter to the Secretary-General:

(a) Encouraging the Secretary-General to continue to call upon all parties engaged in armed conflict in South Sudan to respect in full international humanitarian law and immediately end and prevent grave violations against children in South Sudan and ensure that the protection, rights, well-being and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict are taken into consideration; and noting the Secretary-General's global call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, as called for in Council resolution [2532 \(2020\)](#);

(b) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that UNMISS and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as other relevant United Nations agencies, in line with their respective mandates, continue and strengthen their efforts to support the South Sudanese authorities in (i) developing and strengthening the capacity of their national institutions, to better protect children affected by armed conflict, including through the implementation of the provisions of the comprehensive action plan; (ii) combating impunity, including by strengthening the criminal justice system and facilitating the deployment of mobile courts; (iii) implementing procedures to screen, divert and prevent children from recruitment and use by the national armed and security forces in South Sudan; (iv) mainstreaming the specific needs of children affected by armed conflict and the protection of their rights into all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, including through the development of a gender- and age-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process

and through security sector reform and the prioritization of community-based child protection systems and response services; (v) providing comprehensive reintegration programmes and opportunities, including access to educational opportunities, to children formerly associated with national armed forces and non-State armed groups, and training to the national armed and security forces on the protection of children; (vi) bolstering the education and health systems; and (vii) establishing standard operating procedures for the handover of children formerly associated with national armed forces and groups and for the protection of children in the course of military operations; and requesting the Secretary-General to give full attention to violations against children in the application of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, and to work to ensure that all United Nations entities in the field, including peacekeeping, humanitarian and development operations, implement uniform policies to uphold standards of conduct and ensure adequate services and protection for survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse;

(c) Also requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that the country task force on monitoring and reporting in South Sudan continues its engagement with all signatories of the comprehensive action plan to implement swiftly and in full all provisions of the comprehensive action plan, and in that regard underscoring the importance that the United Nations continue to support and monitor the implementation of the action plan;

(d) Further requesting the Secretary-General to continue to ensure the effectiveness of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict in accordance with relevant Council resolutions and to strengthen its monitoring and reporting activities regarding all violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict in South Sudan and of the child protection component of UNMISS;

(e) Noting the various measures taken by UNMISS and troop- and police-contributing countries to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, while expressing grave concern that sexual exploitation and abuse of children by peacekeepers continues to be a serious protection concern; calling for United Nations peacekeeping operations to continue to implement the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensure the full compliance of their personnel with United Nations policies and procedures; and reiterating its request to the Secretary-General to continue to take all necessary measures in that regard and to keep the Council informed.

8. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, urging all parties engaged in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to ensure that the protection, rights, well-being and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict are fully considered into all reconstruction planning, programmes and strategies, as well as in efforts towards peacebuilding and sustaining peace in connection with child protection actors.

9. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter to the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2206 \(2015\)](#) concerning South Sudan:

(a) Recalling paragraph 9 (c) of Council resolution [1998 \(2011\)](#), in which the Council requested enhanced communication between the Working Group and the relevant Council sanctions committees, including through the exchange of pertinent information on violation and abuses committed against children in armed conflict, and paragraph 21 of resolution [2633 \(2022\)](#), in which the Council requested the

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to share relevant information with the Committee in accordance with paragraph 7 of resolution 1960 (2010) and paragraph 9 of resolution 1998 (2011);

(b) Encouraging the Committee to consider the designation for sanctions of individuals and entities, in accordance with the rules and guidelines of the Committee, and in that regard also encouraging the exchange of pertinent information between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Committee.

10. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the Security Council:

(a) Ensure that the situation of children affected by armed conflict in South Sudan continues to be taken into consideration by the Council when reviewing the mandate and activities of UNMISS;

(b) Ensure the continuation of a child protection mandate for UNMISS, especially with regard to monitoring, reporting, training, capacity-building and mainstreaming, as well as dialogue with the parties to conflict on action plans and support for their implementation, and stressing the need for adequate capacities in that regard;

(c) Communicate the present document to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

Direct action by the Working Group

11. The Working Group agreed to send letters from the Chair of the Working Group addressed to the World Bank and other donors:

(a) Encouraging donors to support, with funding and technical assistance, the efforts of the Government of South Sudan and relevant humanitarian and development agencies in the following:

(i) Establishing effective recruitment procedures and age assessment mechanisms in the national security forces to prevent the recruitment and use of children, consistent with its comprehensive action plan;

(ii) The development and implementation of comprehensive sustainable reintegration programmes that are gender- and age-sensitive and disability-inclusive to children formerly associated with national armed and security forces or non-State armed groups, and enhanced investment in child protection and education systems and services for children affected by the six grave violations and the impacts of armed conflicts;

(iii) Timely and appropriate care for child survivors of sexual and gender-based violence by facilitating the provision of services, reparations and redress for survivors;

(iv) Long-term and sustainable funding for mental health and psychosocial programming in humanitarian contexts and ensuring that all affected children receive timely and sufficient support, and encouraging donors to integrate mental health and psychosocial services into all humanitarian responses;

(v) Bolstering the education and health system;

(vi) Strengthening the domestic criminal and military justice system to address impunity for violations and abuses committed against children in the armed conflict;

(vii) Supporting the implementation of the Civil Registry Law as a means to protect the rights of children and prevent underage recruitment and to guarantee

the comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups;

(viii) Support the United Nations agencies and other relevant organizations in the field, consistent with their mandates, relating to strengthen the child protection capacities of relevant national institutions and their programmes, including those relating to mine action and clearance options;

(ix) Supporting humanitarian and sustainable development efforts in South Sudan to respond to food insecurity and acute malnutrition, and further supporting its economy, including through the creation of jobs and livelihood options for children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups;

(b) Inviting the donors to keep the Working Group informed of their funding and assistance efforts, as appropriate.

Annex**Statement made by the Permanent Representative of South Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict**

Thank you, Madam Chair, for inviting my delegation to participate in today's meeting as the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

I came with mainly an intention to listen to the presentation by Ms. Gamba, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on the report she is presenting to the Working Group. We thank Ms. Gamba for establishing a working relation based on trust and openness. Our authorities will always welcome her visits to South Sudan.

Madam Chair,

I had the opportunity to read the report presented before the Working Group this morning. And, I would like to say few things in line with the report or something that may not be in the report but relevant to the welfare of the children in general.

Madam Chair,

First and foremost, I would like to state that South Sudan condemns with the strongest term possible all the grave abuses committed against children by all those who are involved.

The constitution and the Child act of South Sudan places the minimum age for conscription or voluntary recruitment into armed forces or groups shall be 18 years. The law further stated that, the Government shall provide protection, rehabilitation, care, recovery and reintegration into normal social life for children formerly associated with armed conflict including children from regular and other armed groups and children victims of armed conflict, having due regards to the special needs of girls and their dependents.

Madam Chair,

The above laws cannot be effectively implemented by the Government while the country is in a state of conflict, with many non-state actors using children as foot soldiers without any regards to their age and what the law of the land stipulates. Therefore, for all that has been stated in the report to stop and perpetrators brought to books, we all should work for peace and security to be restored in the country and that peace be sustained.

These shall give us the room to have the comprehensive action plan signed in 2020 implemented without any hiccups and allows schools free from occupation for whatever reason or use than a centre of learning.

Madam Chair,

We are grateful that the UN and the Office of the Special Representative of Children in Armed Conflict have offered a lot of training to the armed forces and other government institutions including the civil societies. We encourage that those training should be continuing because they are of great help in addressing the questions of laws and rights of the child.

The support of the mobile court martial is crucial as it allows the military to try those who committed crimes related to rights of the child and any other behaviours which are damaging to children.

Madam Chair,

In conclusion, the best solution to the continuous involvement of children in armed conflict is for the international community to fully help the parties to implement the agreement before them to its logical conclusion.

I thank you for your attention.
