



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

31 January 2017

Excellency,

In my letter dated 10 January 2017, I informed you of the informal meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the mandate on children and armed conflict on Wednesday, 8 February 2017, from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm, in the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

The program and the concept note of the meeting are attached. There will be no list of speakers for the meeting in advance and Member States are encouraged to engage in an interactive discussion with the panelists. Interventions from the floor should not exceed 3 minutes.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson'.

Peter Thomson

To All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

Informal Meeting of the General Assembly on Children and Armed Conflict
Wednesday, 8 February 2017, from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm,
Trusteeship Council Chamber

Concept Note

Background

In December 1996, four months after the publication of Graça Machel's ground breaking report, "*Impact of armed conflict on children*," the General Assembly adopted resolution 51/77, recommending the appointment of a Special Representative for children and armed conflict, who would report back to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council annually. This was a recognition by the General Assembly that the way we treat children today will have a huge impact on the peace and development of our societies of tomorrow.

Since then, the mandate has been renewed by the General Assembly every three years and the Secretary-General has named three Special Representatives: Olara Otunnu, Radhika Coomaraswamy and Leila Zerrougui.

Over the past 20 years, the coordinated action generated by the mandate, with strong support also from the Security Council, has led to important progress for millions of boys and girls growing up in countries affected by war. Since 2000, more than 115,000 child soldiers have been released as a result of dialogue and Action Plans.

In 2014, when the Special Representative launched the campaign 'Children, Not Soldiers' with UNICEF, Member States demonstrated their desire to turn the page on the recruitment and use of children in conflict. The campaign was endorsed and actively supported by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The advocacy generated by this campaign, and this mandate more generally, has brought about a global consensus among Member States that children should not be recruited and used in conflict, and should be protected from all other grave violations. This is a major achievement and one of the founding objectives of the children and armed conflict mandate.

Despite encouraging progress, important challenges remain to be addressed. Emerging and protracted conflicts are disrupting the lives of millions of children, and continue to fuel the largest movement of populations the world has experienced since the Second World War. Internally displaced or refugee children, many of them unaccompanied or separated, continue to be victims of grave violations. Tens of thousands of children are killed, maimed, recruited and used, abducted and victims of sexual violence. They are victims or targets of groups using extreme violence. Detention is too often used for children allegedly associated with armed groups. Schools and hospitals are under attack, and boys and girls have little or no access to basic life-saving humanitarian assistance. While there has been some progress at national and international level, impunity for the crimes committed against children is common.

The 2030 Agenda envisages a world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. This new development agenda is poised to become a cornerstone of international efforts to help address the needs of children affected by conflict. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize that children, who represent the majority of the population in many countries affected by conflict, are the key to building peaceful and strong societies. Their needs are well integrated in the development agenda, including ensuring quality education and health services, ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and stopping all forms of violence against children. In particular, support should be given to Goal 16.2 to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture against children, and also so Goal 8.7 on the worst forms of child labour, which includes recruitment and use of child soldiers.

The resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council as well as the tools developed through the children and armed conflict mandate provide a strong framework to address grave violations against children, and will greatly contribute to the success of the SDGs.

Panel Discussion

The panel discussion will provide the opportunity to:

- 1. Review achievements of the children and armed conflict mandate over the past 20 years;**
- 2. Discuss challenges and ways to strengthen the protection of children in armed conflict including in the context of the 2030 agenda;**
- 3. Discuss ways to promote assistance, rehabilitation, health care and education to children affected by armed conflict.**

Programme

Opening Remarks: 10.00am – 10.30 am

Panel Discussion: 10.30am – 11.30 am

Presentations by the Panelists

Interactive Discussion: 11.30am – 1.00 pm

Interventions by Member States, Observers, UN system and civil society

Format

The format of the panel will be interactive and involve different stakeholders. After panelist presentations, Member States, Observers, the UN system and civil society will be given the floor for an interactive discussion. Interventions from the floor should not exceed 3 minutes. There will be no advance list of speakers.

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Wednesday, 8 February 2017, from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm,
Trusteeship Council Chamber

Programme

Opening Remarks (10.00-10.30)

- H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly
- Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti , Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General
- Twenty Years for Children: video prepared by the Office of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict

Panel Discussion

Moderator: Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

Presentations by the Panellists (10.30-11.30)

- H.E. Ambassador Olof Skoog, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict
- Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF
- Mr. Miroslav Jenča, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs
- Mr. El Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations
- Ms. Ilwad Elman, Director of Programs and Development, Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre, Somalia
- Video message of Mr. Forest Whitaker, Artist, UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation and SDG Advocate.

Interactive Discussion (11.30-13.00)

Presentations of the panellists will be followed by interventions from Member States, Observers, UN system and civil society.