



Security Council

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Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Conclusions on children and armed conflict in Somalia

1. During a closed videoconference held on 22 May 2020, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict examined the fifth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Somalia ([S/2020/174](#)), which covers the period from 1 August 2016 to 30 September 2019 and was introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations also addressed the Working Group.

2. The members of the Working Group welcomed the report of the Secretary-General, submitted in accordance with Security Council resolutions [1612 \(2005\)](#), [1882 \(2009\)](#), [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2068 \(2012\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#), [2225 \(2015\)](#) and [2427 \(2018\)](#), and took note of the analysis and recommendations contained therein.

3. The members of the Working Group expressed concern at the scale, severity and recurrence of violations and abuses endured by children in Somalia and strongly condemned all violations and abuses that continue to be committed against children in Somalia. They welcomed the signature by the Federal Government of Somalia in October 2019 of a road map to expedite the implementation of the two action plans signed in 2012. Furthermore, they discussed the status of the Child Rights Bill; the status of the Sexual Offences Bill; the draft national strategy for the prevention of child recruitment; the standard operating procedures for the handover of children, endorsed by Somalia in 2014; the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UN SOM) and the child protection advisory capacities of UNSOM and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM); accountability, including for sexual violence committed by State and non-State actors; attacks as well as threats of attacks against schools and hospitals; and the cooperation of the Federal Government and federal member state authorities with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

4. 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 \(2015\)](#) and [2427 \(2018\)](#), the Working Group agreed to the direct action set out below.



Public statement by the Chair of the Working Group

5. The Working Group agreed to address the following message to all parties to the armed conflict in Somalia mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, in particular Al-Shabaab and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a, as well as the Somali National Army, the Somali Police Force, Somali regional forces and clan militias, through a public statement by the Chair of the Working Group:

- (a) Expressing grave concern at the continuing high number of violations and abuses committed against children by all parties to the conflict in Somalia and the disproportionate negative impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on children, strongly condemning such violations and abuses and urging all parties to the conflict to immediately end and prevent all violations of applicable international law 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 and to comply with their obligations under international law;
- (b) Calling upon the parties to further implement the previous conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in Somalia ([S/AC.51/2007/14](#), [S/AC.51/2008/14](#), [S/AC.51/2011/2](#) and [S/AC.51/2017/2](#));
- (c) Stressing the importance of accountability for all violations and abuses against children in armed conflict and stressing that all those responsible must be brought to justice and held accountable without undue delay, including through comprehensive, independent, timely and systematic investigations and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction;
- (d) Expressing deep concern at and condemnation of the high number of children recruited and used, the majority of whom were recruited and used by Al-Shabaab, and strongly urging all parties to the conflict, in particular Al-Shabaab, as well as the Somali security forces, to immediately and without preconditions release all children associated with them and end and prevent the further recruitment and use of children, including the re-recruitment of children who have been released;
- (e) Expressing grave concern at the deprivation of liberty of children for their association or alleged association with armed groups or armed forces; urging the Federal Government of Somalia to comply with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular the obligation that the arrest, detention and imprisonment of children should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time and that, in actions concerning children, the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration, and to prioritize their reintegration, as guided by the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Paris Principles), which it has endorsed, and urging the Federal Government to implement the standard operating procedures for the reception and handover of children separated from armed groups, endorsed by Somalia in 2014, including by treating children associated with armed groups primarily as victims; and calling for sustainable and comprehensive reintegration programmes;
- (f) Expressing deep concern at the high number of children killed or maimed, including as a result of crossfire, failure to take adequate precautions to protect children during armed conflict and indiscriminate attacks involving improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war, targeted killings and air strikes, and urging all parties to take special measures to protect children and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction and proportionality and the obligation to take all feasible precautions to avoid and in any event minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects;

(g) Expressing deep concern about the high number of cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children, including attempted rape and forced marriage, noting that, even though armed groups are responsible for the majority of such violations, Somali security forces and regional forces are responsible for one third of them, and strongly urging all parties to the armed conflict 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 and stressing the importance of accountability for those responsible for sexual and gender-based violence against children, in particular considering that most perpetrators remained at large or were released after the payment of compensation to the victims or their families or received minor sentences;

(h) Strongly condemning the attacks on schools and hospitals in violation of international law, the majority of which were attributed to Al-Shabaab, and calling upon all parties to the 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, and noting the effect that attacks on schools and their use can have on the enjoyment of the right to education;

(i) Strongly condemning the abduction of children, including for recruitment and use, and urging all relevant parties, in particular Al-Shabaab, to cease the abduction of children and all violations and abuses committed against abducted children, including forced marriage of girls to Al-Shabaab fighters, and to immediately release without preconditions all abducted children in their captivity to relevant civilian child protection actors;

(j) Strongly condemning all incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including attacks on humanitarian personnel and looting of humanitarian goods, the majority of which are attributed to Al-Shabaab, and calling upon all parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access to children, consistent with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including respecting 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 their humanitarian partners, without adverse distinction;

(k) Welcoming the efforts made by the Federal Government of Somalia since the previous conclusions of the Working Group to end and prevent the six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict, in particular the signature by the Federal Government in October 2019 of a road map to expedite the implementation of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Somali National Army and the action plan to halt the killing and maiming of children by the Somali National Army, both signed in 2012, and calling for the swift and effective implementation of these action plans and the road map by all government security forces, including the Somali National Army and the Somali Police Force, as well as at the federal member state-level;

(l) Noting the drafting of a national strategy aimed at preventing the recruitment of children and facilitating the release and reintegration of children associated with armed groups and calling for its adoption and implementation, welcoming furthermore the issuance of a general command order by the Commander of the Somali National Army to prevent the recruitment and use of children within the Somali armed forces, as well as all six grave violations against children during military operations, and calling for its full implementation;

(m) Welcoming the deployment of a verification and biometric registration programme in the Somali National Army and encouraging the Federal Government of Somalia to ensure that armed groups or militias integrating into its security forces are screened and that associated children are identified, released and reintegrated;

(n) Calling upon the Federal Government of Somalia to swiftly enact the Child Rights Bill, ensuring that it criminalizes the six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict, as well as the Sexual Offences Bill, strongly encouraging it to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and encouraging it to take into account child rights issues in the framework of the constitutional review process in line with its international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and also calling upon the regional authorities to swiftly align regional legislation with the international obligations of Somalia under the Convention;

(o) Welcoming the enactment of the Sexual Offences Law by Puntland in November 2016, which provides stronger protection for children against sexual violence and has led to increased accountability for victims of sexual violence;

(p) Noting the signature by the President of Puntland on 20 August of a decree pardoning 34 children who had previously received disproportionate sentences, considering that they were children, including death sentences in violation of the international legal obligations of Somalia under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had been imprisoned since 2016 for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab, as well as the release of children from the Puntland forces during the reporting period and their handover to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for reintegration support, as requested in the previous conclusions of the Working Group ([S/AC.51/2017/2](#));

(q) Calling upon all non-State armed groups to express their commitment and take active steps to end and prevent all violations and abuses committed against children and to enter into dialogue with the United Nations to prepare, adopt and implement without delay action plans to end and prevent violations and abuses against children in line with Security Council resolutions [1539 \(2004\)](#), [1612 \(2005\)](#), [1882 \(2009\)](#), [1998 \(2011\)](#) and [2225 \(2015\)](#);

(r) Welcoming the commitments made by the African Union and AMISOM to peace and security in Somalia and to the protection of children affected by armed conflict in Somalia, noting the decrease in the number of grave violations against children attributed to AMISOM and welcoming the close cooperation between the country task force on monitoring and reporting and AMISOM on the protection of children in Somalia, and calling upon AMISOM, the African Union and troop-contributing countries to investigate reports and allegations of violations and abuses against children, to ensure accountability for perpetrators and to further reinforce measures to end and prevent such violations and abuses against children, including by fully implementing the Force Commander's directive on the protection of children's rights and complying with the standard operating procedures on the handover of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups signed by the Federal Government of Somalia;

(s) Recalling that the Security Council, in its resolution [2498 \(2019\)](#), recalled the financial and travel measures imposed by resolution [2002 \(2011\)](#), which apply to individuals and entities designated by the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution [751 \(1992\)](#) concerning Somalia in accordance with paragraph 43 of resolution [2093 \(2013\)](#), for actions that threaten the peace, stability or security of Somalia, such as:

- (i) Recruitment or use of children in armed conflict in Somalia by political or military leaders in violation of applicable international law;
- (ii) Violation of applicable international law in Somalia involving the targeting of civilians, including children and women, in situations of armed conflict, including killing and maiming, sexual and gender-based violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and abduction and forced displacement;
- (iii) Obstruction of the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Somalia or access to or the distribution of humanitarian assistance in Somalia;
- (t) Expressing the readiness of the Working Group to communicate to the Security Council and to the Committee pertinent information with a view to assisting them in the imposition of targeted measures on perpetrators.

6. 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 strengthen community-level engagement and protection and to condemn publicly and continue to advocate ending and preventing violations and abuses against children, notably those involving the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks and threats of attacks against schools and hospitals, abductions and denial of humanitarian access, and to engage with the Federal Government of Somalia, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders to support the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict into their communities, including by raising awareness to avoid stigmatization of such children.

Recommendations to the Security Council

7. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter addressed to the Federal Government of Somalia:

(a) Welcoming the efforts made by the Federal Government of Somalia since the previous conclusions of the Working Group to end and prevent the six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict, in particular the signature by the Federal Government in October 2019 of a road map to expedite the implementation of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Somali National Army and the action plan to halt the killing and maiming of children by the Somali National Army, both signed in 2012, and calling for the swift and effective implementation of these action plans and the road map by all government security forces, including the Somali National Army and the Somali Police Force, as well as security forces at the federal member state-level;

(b) Noting the drafting of a national strategy aimed at preventing the recruitment of children and facilitating the release and reintegration of children associated with armed groups and calling for its adoption and implementation, welcoming furthermore the issuance of a general command order by the Commander of the Somali National Army to prevent the recruitment and use of children within the Somali armed forces, as well as the six grave violations against children during military operations, and calling for its full implementation;

(c) Welcoming the deployment of a verification and biometric registration programme in the Somali National Army and encouraging the Federal Government of Somalia to ensure that armed groups or militias integrating into its security forces are screened and that associated children are identified, released and reintegrated;

(d) Calling upon the Federal Government of Somalia to swiftly enact the Child Rights Bill, ensuring that it criminalizes the six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict, as well as the Sexual Offences Bill, including by providing non-discriminatory and comprehensive specialized services, such as psychosocial, health, legal and livelihood support and services, for survivors of sexual violence, strongly encouraging the Federal Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, encouraging it to take into account child rights issues in the framework of the constitutional review process in compliance with its international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and requesting it to encourage the relevant federal member states to swiftly align regional legislation with the international obligations of Somalia under the Convention;

(e) Expressing deep concern at the lack of accountability and impunity for violations and abuses committed against children, including accountability for acts of sexual violence, and calling upon the Federal Government of Somalia to put an end to impunity by ensuring that all those responsible for violations and abuses against children are brought to justice and held accountable without undue delay, including through comprehensive, independent, timely and systematic investigation and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction;

(f) Welcoming the enactment of the Sexual Offences Law by Puntland in November 2016, which provides stronger protection for children against sexual violence and has led to increased accountability for victims of sexual violence;

(g) Noting the signature by the President of Puntland on 20 August of a decree pardoning 34 children who had previously received disproportionate sentences, considering that they were children, including death sentences in violation of the international legal obligations of Somalia under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had been imprisoned since 2016 for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab, as well as the release of children from the Puntland forces during the reporting period and their handover to UNICEF for reintegration support, as requested in the previous conclusions of the Working Group ([S/AC.51/2017/2](#));

(h) Stressing the primary role of the Federal Government of Somalia in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict in Somalia and recognizing the importance of strengthening national capacities in this regard;

(i) Expressing deep concern about the killing and maiming of children in violation of applicable international law in the course of military operations, reminding the Federal Government of Somalia of its obligations under international law and urging it to take special measures to protect children and make all efforts to protect children, including through strict adherence to the principles of distinction and proportionality in the conduct of military operations, as well as to the obligation to take all feasible precautions to avoid and in any event minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects;

(j) Welcoming the release of children by the Somali security forces and calling upon those forces, the Somali regional forces and allied militias to release children who are still within their ranks to relevant civilian child protection actors;

(k) Expressing grave concern about the detention of children on national security charges in violation of applicable international law, including by the National Intelligence and Security Agency, and urging the Federal Government of Somalia to comply with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular the obligation that the arrest, detention or imprisonment of children should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time

and that in actions concerning children the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration, and to prioritize their reintegration, guided by the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Paris Principles), which it has endorsed; and urging the Federal Government to implement the standard operating procedures for the reception and handover of children separated from armed groups, endorsed by Somalia in 2014, including by treating children associated with armed groups primarily as victims;

(l) Expressing deep concern about the high number of cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children, including attempted rape and forced marriage, noting that, even though armed groups are responsible for the majority of such violations, Somali security forces and regional forces are responsible for one third of them, and strongly urging all parties to the armed conflict 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 and stressing the importance of accountability for those responsible for sexual and gender-based violence against children, in particular considering that most perpetrators remained at large or were released after the payment of compensation to the victims or their families or received minor sentences;

(m) Urging the Federal Government of Somalia to ensure that all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and security sector reforms take into account the age- and gender-specific needs and protection of children affected by armed conflict and that existing vetting mechanisms are strengthened, so that no perpetrators of violations and abuses against children are integrated or recruited into the regional and federal security forces, and to systematically withdraw all perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children from its ranks;

(n) Calling upon the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to further support and cooperate with United Nations entities and civil society organizations providing sustainable reintegration opportunities for children affected by armed conflict, including those formerly associated with Al-Shabaab, such as raising awareness within communities to avoid the stigmatization of such children, as well as psychosocial support, back-to-school support programmes and vocational training, and urging the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to take into account the specific needs of boys and girls, as well as of children with disabilities, orphans and unaccompanied children;

(o) Welcoming the training of Somali security forces, including the organization, in collaboration with the European Union Training Mission for Somalia, UNSOM and AMISOM, of joint child protection training, requesting the Federal Government of Somalia to ensure training of its security forces and requesting it to increase its support for the Child Protection Unit of the Ministry of Defence with additional technical, financial and human resources;

(p) Expressing concern about the military use of schools by the Somali National Army, the Somali Police Force and clan militias in violation of international law and stressing the importance of access to education and health care for children in Somalia, commending the Federal Government of Somalia for its commitment to education and the protection of schools, including through its endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration, and calling upon the Federal Government to ensure that schools and related personnel are protected;

(q) Inviting the Federal Government of Somalia to keep the Working Group informed of its efforts to implement the recommendations of the Working Group and the Secretary-General, as appropriate.

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

- (a) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure the effectiveness of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in Somalia and of the child protection component of UNSOM, including by allocating sufficient dedicated child protection capacity to the component to, inter alia, monitor and report on violations and abuses committed against children and engage in dialogue with parties to armed conflict on action plans and their implementation, and to continue to include in future reports of the Secretary-General information and analysis on children and armed conflict in Somalia, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions;
- (b) Also requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations continues its advocacy for the release and reintegration of children associated with armed groups and armed forces and of children detained for their alleged association with armed groups;
- (c) Further requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting prioritizes its efforts to ensure that the action plans and road map are fully implemented;
- (d) Encouraging continued cooperation of the United Nations with AMISOM, in particular on the protection of children arrested and captured during military and security operations;
- (e) Inviting the Secretary-General to request UNSOM, the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF and other relevant United Nations agencies, within their respective mandates, to continue to strengthen their efforts to support the Federal Government of Somalia and regional authorities in fighting impunity, implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, establishing effective age verification mechanisms, mainstreaming the specific needs and protection of children affected by armed conflict into all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and security sector reforms and providing long-term rehabilitation and reintegration programmes to children.

9. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter by the Chair of the Working Group to the President of the Peace and Security Council and the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union:

- (a) Welcoming the commitments made by the African Union and AMISOM to peace and security in Somalia and to the protection of children affected by armed conflict in Somalia;
- (b) Noting the decrease in the number of violations and abuses against children attributed to AMISOM, and welcoming the close cooperation between the country task force on monitoring and reporting and AMISOM on the protection of children in Somalia;
- (c) Stressing the need for all military action against Al-Shabaab to be conducted in compliance with international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction and proportionality;
- (d) Encouraging AMISOM to fully implement the Force Commander's directive on the protection of children's rights during and after operations and to comply with the standard operating procedures for the reception and handover of children separated from armed groups in Somalia signed by the Federal Government of Somalia;

- (e) Encouraging AMISOM to continue its cooperation with the United Nations regarding child protection issues and urging AMISOM to devise an alert system to inform the United Nations whenever its forces capture and hand children over to the Somali National Army and the National Intelligence and Security Agency to enable adequate follow-up of the situation of those children and ensure their protection;
- (f) Calling upon AMISOM and the African Union to investigate and report thoroughly and transparently allegations of violations and abuses against children by their troops and ensure accountability for perpetrators;
- (g) Strongly encouraging the Peace and Security Council to support as a priority provisions for the protection of children specified in the United Nations Security Council mandate for AMISOM;
- (h) Further encouraging the African Union to deploy child protection officers or designate child protection focal points within AMISOM to contribute to training, capacity-building and advocacy on violations and abuses committed against children.

10. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter by the Chair of the Working Group to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution [751 \(1992\)](#) concerning Somalia:

- (a) Recalling paragraph 7 (b) of resolution [1882 \(2009\)](#), by which the Security Council requested enhanced communication between the Working Group and relevant Council sanctions committees, including through the exchange of pertinent information on violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict;
- (b) Encouraging the continued sharing of relevant information by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict with the Committee and the Working Group;
- (c) Encouraging the Committee to continue to consider the designation for sanctions of individuals and entities, in accordance with the rules and guidelines of the Committee.

11. The Working Group agreed on the following vis-à-vis the Security Council:

- (a) Recommending that the Security Council continue to take into due consideration the situation of children and armed conflict in Somalia, in particular when discussing the mandates of UNSOM and AMISOM and their activities;
- (b) Encouraging the Security Council to ensure the continuation of and support for the implementation of a child protection mandate for UNSOM, especially with regard to monitoring and reporting, as well as dialogue with parties to the armed conflict on action plans and support in their implementation;
- (c) Inviting the Security Council to transmit the present document to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution [751 \(1992\)](#) concerning Somalia.

Direct action by the Working Group

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

- (a) Stressing that the best way to protect children is through peace and urging the World Bank and donors to continue to provide political and financial support to Somali peacebuilding initiatives;
- (b) Calling upon donors to prioritize support for the timely and effective implementation of the two action plans signed in 2012 and the road map for the

expedited implementation of the two action plans, including by making funding available;

(c) Also calling upon donors to provide support to programmes and initiatives of federal and regional authorities aimed at protecting children affected by the armed conflict in Somalia, including prevention and reintegration activities and strengthening of justice and rule of law institutions, as well as finding durable solutions for internally displaced children;

(d) Further calling upon donors to support the child protection efforts and initiatives of United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations related to the strengthening of federal and regional capacities, institutions and programmes, such as putting in place age assessment mechanisms in the recruitment process of the Somali National Army and other security forces and promoting birth registration;

(e) Urging donors that support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and security sector reforms to take into account the rights, specific needs and protection of children affected by armed conflict;

(f) Encouraging donors to support the development of clear codes of conduct for Somali security forces that strictly prohibit violations against children, including the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of international law, and to support the development of accountability and oversight mechanisms to ensure that all those responsible for violations and abuses against children are swiftly brought to justice and held accountable without undue delay, including through comprehensive, independent, timely and systematic investigation and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction;

(g) Calling upon the donor community to support the release and reintegration of children, and highlighting that it must be in line with international law, including the best interests of the child;

(h) Encouraging donors to ensure support for the training of relevant federal and regional security authorities, including the Somali National Army, the Somali Police Force, the Child Protection Unit of the Ministry of Defence and the National Intelligence and Security Agency, and community child protection focal points on child protection issues;

(i) Calling for greater support for employment opportunities, as well as health care, psychosocial support, education and awareness-raising, among community leaders and parents throughout Somalia on the prevention of the recruitment and use of children in violation of international law and encouraging donors to support such efforts;

(j) Encouraging donors to support and research programming on the prevention of radicalization in the context of Somalia;

(k) Inviting international partners, including the World Bank and donors, to keep the Working Group informed of their funding and assistance efforts, as appropriate.

Annex

Statement made by the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Esteemed members of the panel, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my privilege to address you today on behalf of Somalia on the important issue of children and armed conflict, which is fully in line with Somalia's response to the draft version of the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. This report comes at a critical time when the world faces an unprecedented challenge due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In Somalia, the pandemic is impacting vulnerable populations significantly, including children.

The report of the Special Representative contains serious alleged violations committed against children in Somalia. While we welcome the report, we note, as indicated in the Federal Government's response to the observations, that the report fails to provide an overview of our Government's positive actions already in place to mitigate and respond to the risk of children in armed conflict.

During her visit to Somalia, upon the invitation of the Federal Government, the Special Representative witnessed first-hand the positive measures put in place to ensure that children are protected and are able to enjoy their rights freely. On the same visit, Somalia also renewed its commitment to end the recruitment, use, killing and maiming of children, in a ceremony witnessed by the Special Representative at the end of her mission.

It is important to emphasize that the Government of Somalia is committed through its Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development to improve the legal framework for the protection and promotion of child rights, as stipulated in national and international frameworks that Somalia is a party to. Moreover, key legislation, such as the National Child Rights Bill, has been developed by the Ministry to better protect children in Somalia from the six grave violations.

Among key legislations, the Federal Government has made progress towards the enactment of the Sexual Offences Bill, which will criminalize a wide range of sexual offences, including those committed against children. The bill sets out clear duties for police, investigators, and prosecutors and imposes penalties on those who fail to adequately investigate or prosecute people for crimes of sexual violence against children, among other things. Also, the bill prioritizes the rights and needs of the survivors during proceedings to protect their identity and welfare.

Furthermore, Somalia has initiated the development of a national strategy for victim assistance, an international best practice in accordance with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Treaty). This strategy will support child survivors of armed conflict, which include children maimed or affected in the context of the conflict. This is one of the measures being undertaken to strengthen the response on the ground and minimize the impact of conflict on children.

To reduce the chance of child recruitment in the military, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Internal Security completed, respectively, the biometric registration of all Somali National Army officers and Somali Police Force officers. This process aimed, among other things, to register troops and police eligible to serve in the Somali National Army and Somali Police Force and to deal with the possible recruitment of children into these forces. We believe that the biometric registration

process has contributed to tackling the concerns about the recruitment and use of children, and the Government is committed to ensuring that children are not recruited or used in the Somali armed forces.

Additionally, Somalia has put in place some key agreements to strengthen security and address in the longer term the violations and abuse against children. These include Somalia's transition plan and the national security architecture. Implementation of these plans will address the command and control issues and strengthen compliance and professionalization of the forces.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Somalia is committed to the protection of children and the implementation of the action plans on the killing and maiming of children, and the recruitment and use of children. During her mission, the Special Representative agreed with our Government that the renewed commitment needs to be followed by practical actions to effectively implement the action plans with adequate focus, technical assistance from the Special Representative's good offices and the mobilization of resources. We look forward to working closely with the Office of the Special Representative to realize this commitment for all children in Somalia.
