



**SLOVENIA**

*Check against delivery!*

**Statement by Ambassador Darja Bavdaž Kuret,  
Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations  
at the Security Council Open Debate on  
"Children and Armed Conflict"  
New York, 9 July 2018**

Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking Sweden for organizing this open debate and the Secretary-General for his annual report. We welcome the focus of today's debate on the important role of protection of children today for prevention of conflicts tomorrow and thank all briefers for their comprehensive presentations.

Slovenia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the European Union as well as Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of children an armed conflict and would like to make some additional remarks in the national capacity.

Mr President,

The issue of children and armed conflict, as a cross-cutting issue, needs a comprehensive approach, where human rights, security and development go hand in hand. It is important to efficiently and sustainably address the short, medium and long term impacts of armed conflicts on children in an effective and comprehensive manner.

Today's debate marks 20 years since the first UN Security Council open debate in June 1998 and we can observe some progress has been made since the issue of children and armed conflict was put on the UN agenda. We noted in Secretary General's report the release of over 10,000 children in 2017. It is essential not only that children are released by armed forces and groups and returned to their families and communities, but also to address their psychosocial well-being and to ensure their development and future without fear/threats of re-recruitment or commitment of other grave violations against them.

Complex and evolving nature of armed conflicts requires maximum utilizations of all tools available to protect children. We therefore welcome the continued engagement with different regional actors and believe that specific provisions for the protection of children should continue to be included in all relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations, as well as political and peace building missions, including by means of the deployment of child protection advisers.

Mr President,

Despite progress achieved the findings documented in the Secretary-General's latest report are also beyond concerning: increase in grave violations committed against children and the increase in civilian casualties, use of landmines and cluster munitions, use of children as human shields and suicide bombers, cross-border nature of violations, continuous attacks on schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access for civilians are deeply concerning and must be urgently addressed.

For Slovenia wellbeing of children, protection and respect of their rights is among our greatest priorities. Children are all of our future and enabling safe, healthy and peaceful environment for their development, providing access to education for all is a pre-requirement to a safe future for everybody.

For more than 25 years Slovenia has been committed to lessen the burden of children affected by armed conflicts. In 2018 we continued to provide psychosocial support and physical rehabilitation of children and focus on their empowerment. The latter is implemented by supporting 2 projects for Syrian refugees in Jordan carried out by a Slovene Non-governmental organisation KROG and ITF Enhancing Human Security respectively.

Both projects are aiming to empower Syrian children and their mothers by providing social rehabilitation for children through schooling and organising psychosocial workshops on life skills development for women and children. Second project is designed as a Mine Risk Education programme for Syrian refugee children in the northern Jordanian provinces and aims to raise awareness regarding mines and explosive remnants of war and to promote safety precautions with a view to minimising the number of victims on their return to their homes.

Mr President,

We have heard clearly Ms. Londoño's message today on the importance of integrating the protection, rights and well-being of children in peace processes. Empowering children to become actors for peace is in this context of utmost importance. Allow me to mention two Slovene initiatives that aim to achieve just that.

For almost 15 years Slovenia has supported the project called "Our Rights" – a human rights education project aimed at promoting a culture of peace, non-discrimination and tolerance anchored in respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Since the beginning of this initiative more than 190 thousand children in 26 countries in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa were included.

In 2017 we also launched a project of school and peer mediation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Based on good practices from Slovenian schools, teachers and students are trained to practice mediation techniques in their schools. Through this project schools are becoming vocal promoters of dialogue, tolerance, reconciliation, human rights and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Mr President,

Monitoring as well as accurate and timely reporting is crucial to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, established in accordance with Security Council Resolutions, is therefore a key mechanism of the UN's children protection mandate.

Although steps have been taken to make the persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children accountable, we believe that the Security Council should further impose targeted measures on such perpetrators thus preventing them from further committing grave violations against children. Stronger steps should be taken to address accountability and end impunity for perpetrators. Slovenia is convinced that the work of the International Criminal Court and other International tribunals can add to breaking the culture of impunity for such crimes.

As mentioned at the beginning the issue of children and armed conflict, as a cross-cutting issue, needs a comprehensive approach. Part of this are also initiatives such as the Paris Principles, the Oslo Safe School Declaration and the Vancouver Principles. Slovenia would like to call on Member States that have not done so yet, to join these initiatives that foster the implementation of the framework set by the Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion - it is our duty to do our utmost to prevent children from suffering, regardless of whether a situation is on the Security Council's agenda or not. Adoption of a new resolution today is an important step in this direction and it is for this reason that Slovenia has joined in co-sponsoring the resolution.

I thank you