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**A MANDATE**  
to **PROTECT**  
**CHILDREN**  
**AFFECTED**  
by **CONFLICT**

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Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for  
**CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT**


# A mandate to improve the protection of children affected by armed conflict

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict serves as the leading UN advocate for the protection and well-being of children affected by armed conflict.







**T**he mandate of the Special Representative was created by the General Assembly (resolution A/RES/51/77) following the 1996 publication of a report by Graça Machel titled “Impact of Armed Conflict on Children”. The report presented a comprehensive picture of child soldiers, highlighted the disproportionate impact of war on children and identified them as the primary victims of armed conflict. The first Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was named in 1997 by the Secretary-General to help enhance the

protection of children affected by armed conflict, and foster international cooperation to that end. The Special Representative must also raise awareness about the plight of these children, and promote the monitoring and reporting of abuses. In accordance with the mandate, the Special Representative reports annually to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

Since 1999, the systematic engagement of the UN Security Council has confirmed the situation of children affected by armed conflict as an issue affecting peace and security.

The Security Council has provided the Office of the Special Representative with a strong framework of tools to respond to violations against children. 

## Six grave violations affecting children in times of conflict have been identified:

-  Recruitment and use of children\*
-  Killing and maiming\*
-  Rape and sexual violence in conflict\*
-  Attacks on schools and hospitals\*
-  Abduction of children\*
-  Denial of access

\* Triggers for listing

# The Security Council adopted resolutions to request the UN to:

## ⦿ GATHER AND VERIFY INFORMATION

Gather and verify information detailing where and how children are affected by armed conflict.

## ⦿ INCLUDE INFORMATION IN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S ANNUAL REPORT

Include this information in the Secretary-General's annual report to the Security Council on children and armed conflict.

## ⦿ NAME VIOLATING PARTIES

Name parties to conflict who commit violations that are triggers for listing.

## ⦿ ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE AND DEVELOP ACTION PLANS

Engage in dialogue with listed Governments and armed groups to develop Action Plans aimed at halting and preventing violations against children.

## What is an Action Plan?

An Action Plan is a written, signed commitment between the United Nations and parties to conflict listed in the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict. Each Action Plan outlines concrete, time-bound measures to end violations against children, release and reunify children with their families and establish mechanisms aimed at preventing future violations and ensuring accountability.

For example, an agreement to end the recruitment and use of children by

Government forces might include actions calling on the authorities to:

- ⦿ issue military command orders prohibiting the recruitment and use of children
- ⦿ criminalize the recruitment and use of children
- ⦿ integrate age-verification mechanisms in recruitment procedures
- ⦿ release all children identified in the ranks of security forces
- ⦿ ensure children's reintegration into civilian life

## Timeline:

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1996



### **Publication of Graça Machel report**

The Report of Graça Machel: Impact of Armed Conflict on Children highlights the disproportionate impact of war on children and identifies them as the primary victims of armed conflict.

### **General Assembly creates mandate**

The General Assembly creates the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

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1997



### **First Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict**

The Secretary-General names Olara A. Otunnu as his first Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

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1998



### **First debate of the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict**

The Security Council holds its first debate on children and armed conflict and “expresses its intention to pay serious attention to the situation of children affected by armed conflicts.”

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1999



### **Security Council Resolution 1261**

Security Council resolution 1261 places the issue of children affected by armed conflict on the Council agenda, and identifies and condemns grave violations against children.

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2000



### **Security Council Resolution 1314**

Security Council resolution 1314 reaffirms that the deliberate targeting of civilians, including children, may constitute a threat to peace and security and requests the Secretary-General to continue to report to the Security Council on children and armed conflict.

### **Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted**

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict is adopted by the General Assembly to protect children under 18 from recruitment and use in hostilities.

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2001



### **Security Council Resolution 1379**

Security Council resolution 1379 requests the Secretary-General to identify and list parties to conflict that recruit and use children.

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2002



### **Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child enters into force**

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict enters into force.

2003



**Security Council Resolution 1460**

Security Council resolution 1460 calls for dialogue with parties to conflict that recruit or use children to develop clear, time-bound Action Plans to end the practices.

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2004



**Security Council Resolution 1539**

Security Council resolution 1539 requests the establishment of a systematic and comprehensive Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism to provide timely, accurate and reliable information on the recruitment and use of children and other violations committed against children affected by armed conflict. It also renews the call for parties to conflict listed by the Secretary-General to prepare concrete, time-bound Action Plans.

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2005



**Security Council Resolution 1612**

Security Council resolution 1612 endorses the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism proposed by the Secretary-General to collect timely and reliable information on violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict. It also creates the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

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2009



**Security Council Resolution 1882**

Security Council resolution 1882 establishes “killing and maiming” and “sexual violence against children” as triggers to list parties to armed conflict in the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

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2011



**Security Council Resolution 1998**

Security Council resolution 1998 establishes “attacks on schools and/or hospitals” and “attacks or threats of attacks against protected persons” as triggers to list parties to armed conflict in the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

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2014



**Launch of “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign**

Launch of the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign aimed at ending child recruitment and use by government armed forces in conflict by the end of 2016.

**Security Council Resolution 2143**

Security Council resolution 2143 expresses concern about the military use of schools and encourages Member States to consider concrete measures to deter the practice. It also endorses the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign.

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2015



**Security Council resolution 2225**

Security Council resolution 2225 establishes “abduction of children” as a trigger to list parties to armed conflict in the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

# Twenty Years for Children

Since 2000, more than 115,000 child soldiers have been released as a result of Action Plans and the collective efforts of child protection actors

In the past two years, the campaign ‘Children, Not Soldiers’, an initiative launched to consolidate the emerging global consensus that children do not belong in Government forces in conflict and to galvanize support to end and prevent this practice, has contributed to this progress. The campaign helped the UN work with the Member States concerned as true partners by addressing gaps, building capacity and developing strong national ownership.


Over the years, this crucial work to address child recruitment has helped lay the foundations to address other grave violations. There has been substantial engagement to protect schools and hospitals, as well as to curb sexual violence in conflict. Intensifying the cooperation with our partners and developing new alliances for children, through partnership agreements with regional organizations, has also helped to increase the reach of the mandate. From early on, peace talks were identified as opportunities to address children’s needs and their protection. This mandate has demonstrated on several occasions that parties to conflict



**“Children, Not Soldiers” campaign launched in 2014 in conjunction with UNICEF.**

PHOTO: UN DPI/Graphic Design Unit

can agree on the protection of children, even when they disagree on almost everything else.

While it is important to recognize the progress accomplished in the past two decades, it is equally vital to look for new solutions to address the urgent challenges faced by boys and girls. Protracted conflicts, violent extremism and mass deprivation of liberty are just a few of the new and reoccurring concerns children are faced with. Protecting children in situations of armed conflict is a constant and evolving endeavour, which requires innovative solutions and broad collaboration. 

# Progress and achievements

## ⦿ OVER 115,000 CHILD SOLDIERS RELEASED

Over 115,000 child soldiers released since 2000 as a result of dialogue and Action Plans.

## ⦿ GLOBAL CONSENSUS TO PROTECT CHILDREN

Global consensus that children should not be recruited and used by national security forces in conflict, and should be protected from all other grave violations.

## ⦿ 11 RESOLUTIONS ON CHILDREN ADOPTED

11 resolutions on children and armed conflict adopted by the UN Security Council.

## ⦿ 27 ACTION PLANS SIGNED

27 Action Plans signed with parties to conflict.

## ⦿ 9 PARTIES TO CONFLICT DELISTED

9 parties to conflict in Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Uganda delisted from the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict following completion of their Action Plan.

## ⦿ MECHANISM ESTABLISHED

Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism established in all countries where parties are listed to provide timely and reliable

information to the UN Security Council and UN highest bodies.

## ⦿ 166 RATIFICATIONS

166 ratifications to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, adopted in 2000.

## ⦿ PARIS PRINCIPLES ADOPTED IN 2007

Paris Principles adopted in 2007 and endorsed by 105 States with the aim to ensure child soldiers are treated primarily as victims, not perpetrators and that their reintegration is a priority.

## ⦿ STRONG GLOBAL ACTION FOR SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS

Strong global action for the protection of schools and hospitals.

## ⦿ SAFE SCHOOLS DECLARATION

Safe Schools declaration against military use of schools adopted in 2015 and already endorsed by 56 States.

## ⦿ ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN CONFLICT

Strong international commitment and progress to end sexual violence against children in conflict.

# Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

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Professor Virginia Gamba was appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict at the Under-Secretary-General level in April 2017.

**P**rior to this appointment, she was Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, established by the Security Council, on the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria.

Professor Gamba brings more than 30 years of experience and professional leadership to issues related to disarmament, peace and human security.

Between 2012 and 2015, she served as Director and Deputy to the High

**Virginia Gamba, the fourth Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.**


PHOTO: UN Photo/Kim Haughton

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Representative for Disarmament Affairs in the Office for Disarmament Affairs, and as Deputy Director of Safety and Security at the Institute for Public Safety in Argentina's Ministry of Justice from 2009 to 2012.

From 2007 to 2009, Ms. Gamba was an Expert Consultant with the European Union, helping the African Union develop its implementation strategy for the African Common Approach to Combat Illicit Small Arms Trafficking. In South Africa, between 2001 and 2007, she was Director of South-South Interactions at SaferAfrica, having previously been Deputy Director at the Institute for Security Studies between 1996 and 2001. In Geneva, between 1992 and 1996, she served as Director of the Disarmament and Conflict Resolution Programme at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. She was also a Senior Lecturer in Latin American security studies in the Department of War Studies at King's College, London. 

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