



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK**

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SECURITY COUNCIL – OPEN VTC ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

STATEMENT ATTRIBUTABLE TO GEORG SPARBER, CHARGE D’AFFAIRES A.I.

DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

25 years ago, the General Assembly created the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda – as a response to the many devastating effects of war on children. While the CAAC mandate has had a positive impact on the livelihoods of many children since, the current situation sadly illustrates its continued urgent relevance. The number of grave violations against children remained high in 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic has increased their vulnerabilities. We reiterate that the protection of the mandate’s independence and integrity is crucial to its effectiveness and credibility. This also includes the objective, consistent and transparent practice of listing parties that have committed grave violations against children and those that have and have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children.

Mr. President,

Liechtenstein remains deeply concerned about the high occurrence of sexual and gender based violence against children. Such violence is often underreported owing to fear of stigmatization and cultural taboos, in particular when perpetrated against boys, as also documented by the All

Survivors Project. A culture of silence continues to impede accountability and justice, and contributes to further cycles of violence and persistent harmful gender stereotypes. In times of quarantines, lockdowns and other restrictions on movement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is particularly important to ensure access to reporting mechanisms and to safe, timely, quality, age-appropriate, survivor-centred medical care and mental health and psychosocial support services for all survivors. We reiterate our strong support for the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Representative to shed light on victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including men and boys, in line with Security Council Resolution 2467.

We furthermore continue to be alarmed about the attacks against schools and other education institutions. Such attacks violate the right to education and often constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. Depriving children of access to education and thus violating the right to education also has a devastating impact on sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated inequalities and limited access to education. The Safe School Declaration remains an important tool and its effective implementation is key.

Mr. President,

The international justice system has played a key role in ending impunity for grave violations against children. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court has been exemplary in its child-sensitive approach. It requires the Chief Prosecutor to appoint advisers with legal expertise on violence against children and the ICC to take measures to protect the safety, physical and psychological well-being, dignity and privacy of victims and witnesses, and to have regard to age in this respect.

Engaged in the prosecution of crimes committed against children from its inception, the ICC has been vital in determining how to handle cases involving child soldiers, including complex cases

with children involved both as perpetrator and victim. The case of Dominic Ongwen is a prime example: Found guilty for a total of 61 crimes comprising crimes against humanity and war crimes, he himself was kidnapped and forced into military service at a young age. The ICC's conviction of Bosco Ntaganda for the forced enlistment of boys and girls in armed groups, and the perpetration of sexual violence against them, is an important step forward in ensuring justice for children in conflict. It is also a milestone decision in recognizing sexual and gender based violence against both male and female child soldiers equally. The ICC Trust Fund for Victims has provided important assistance to children and it is in the process of designing measures providing collective reparations with individualized components for the victims and survivors of the Ntaganda case. Liechtenstein has been a donor and supporter of the Trust Fund for many years.

Mr. President,

The situation in Syria continues to be of grave concern to us. The conflict has entered its eleventh year, with grave impacts on children. Millions have suffered death, injury, displacement, destruction, poverty, hunger and insecurity. An estimated 11.1 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, of which 4.8 million are children. We call on the Security Council to ensure safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access to all Syrians in need. We furthermore support the Secretary-General's Special Representative in her call to parties to the conflict to remove all impediments to humanitarian access to children and to enable unimpeded access to education. And we welcome her continued engagement and cooperation with special mechanisms, including the General Assembly accountability mechanism (IIIM).

I thank you.